



BILL

A ventriloquist's dummy which has achieved immortality. It was the first object ever televised by JOHN LOGIE BAIRD on 2 October 1925.

# TELEVISION JUBILEE



# TELEVISION

The Story of

By

With a foreword by



# JUBILEE



25 years of BBC Television

GORDON ROSS

Hugh Carleton Greene, O.B.E.

*(Director-General, BBC)*

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## FOREWORD

by the Director-General of the B.B.C.

For most readers, when they come to the end of this fast-moving, enjoyable and at times hilarious narrative, three impressions will, I believe, outlast the others. First, it is the record of an achievement as distinctively British as the creation of the locomotive or the radar system. Secondly, it is the story of personal enthusiasm—self-sacrificing, imaginative and tenacious. And thirdly, but for the decision to give the job of developing television to the B.B.C., British television would be a different, and very inferior thing, today.

The first and last of these impressions are closely related. When the Government, in 1936, entrusted to the B.B.C. the operation of the world's first television service, the Corporation was already well established as part of the British scene. Television for Britain was from its infancy part of an organization that had been in hard training for more than a decade in providing the elements of a nation-wide public service of broadcasting. It was the fruits of this experience—the standards, the aims and above all the zest—which gave the new service a unique character—and this character the B.B.C. has continued to develop from year to year as new methods and fresh experiments have enlarged the scope of what it can provide.

The second impression—that of personal enthusiastic endeavour—is also linked with the last. Though the B.B.C. is now a large and highly organized body of 17,000, it is still, I am glad to say, a collection of (often recalcitrant, rebellious and self-willed) individuals and a place where the individual's creative talents and professional skills can develop and flourish undisturbed by considerations which have nothing to do with broadcasting.

The varied qualities which have made the B.B.C.'s television service are vividly illustrated in Mr Ross's book. They are the qualities on which the B.B.C. relies today as much as in the past; and it is these qualities and the tradition which they have established which entitle the B.B.C. to look forward with the greatest confidence to what lies ahead in the next twenty-five years.

14 February 1961

HUGH CARLETON GREENE

## APPRECIATION

It was on a crisp October morning in 1959 that *Television Jubilee* took its first human breath. By that time I had completed the seemingly never-ending task of studying thousands of cuttings in the archives of Broadcasting House and was driving to Newbury to see Jasmine Bligh, one of the two women announcers selected to open the B.B.C.s Television service in 1936. It was here, in a delightful country cottage over red wine and potatoes in their jackets, that I first sensed the atmosphere which prevailed for the pioneers of those memorable and tremendously exciting days, and it was here that a chain of co-operation began which has made possible the telling of the B.B.C.s television story. It is to the many links in this chain that I now say "Thank you", not only for willing help, but for generous hospitality which has made this book so richly satisfying to write. The shape of the story has been moulded in many a congenial surrounding: the film studio at Boreham Wood where Tony Hancock was making *The Rebel*, the canteens at Lime Grove, The Television Centre, the offices of Heads of Departments, the homes of Cecil Madden, Gilbert Harding, Eric Robinson and Eamonn Andrews, the newspaper office of Richard Dimbleby, for example. I look back with affection and gratitude to the many hours spent with Douglas Birkinshaw who filled the first post ever created by B.B.C. Television—that of Research Engineer in 1932, and is now Superintendent Engineer. His patience whilst I have tried to assimilate technical knowledge is worthy of high praise. I even look back affectionately to the occasion when a full glass of beer was tipped all over me by an over-zealous barman, and after the mopping up operations had been completed, Cyril Fletcher, my host, asked whimsically "Are you still all soppy?" I can only hope that the innumerable links will, in the light of the final work, consider their enthusiasm and co-operation to have been worth while. For my part, I am immensely grateful to them all.

GORDON ROSS

To

all those who have played a part  
in this television story and, because  
of overwhelming weight of numbers, are  
not mentioned individually.

## CHAPTER I: EARLY DAYS

*John Logie Baird, the pioneer of Television . . . the E.M.I. Company . . . the years before the B.B.C. began a Television service.*

My memory conjures up visions of standing the whole night in the rain, cold and miserable, while Stibbs, the chief ganger, and his men dug holes in the road to find faulty cables. Trying to placate a gang of Irish labourers at four o'clock in the morning, when they want to stop the job and go home, is anything but pleasant. Sometimes in the night drunken fights started. I remember one particular night Jimmy McGauchy knocking Billy McIlvancey down a manhole and both finally departing with roars of pain and anger and volleys of cursing, and all the time steady rain falling and a bitter wind blowing. Sordid miserable work punctuated by repeated colds and influenza. I wanted more money. I received thirty shillings a week and was unable to get a better job because I was always ill. Finally I decided it was hopeless and I had better try to start something which was less strenuous and in which I would be my own master.

THESE words were written by the son of a man John Logie Baird, who at the age of twenty made telephone, and later became an engineer. Baird went to Glasgow University and the Royal Technical College in 1894. As an engineer in The Clyde Valley Company he did his duties so bitterly above and beyond the call of duty that he dogged him throughout his whole life. In 1904, when he was twenty-four, he tried his hand at another. He tried to make diamonds out of coal, sold jam; went to the West Indies in 1905 to improve his health and came back with a cargo of marmalade and tamarind syrup. He

Australian honey; then it was soap, and then at last, for the benefit of mankind—it was television.

Baird did not claim to have invented the idea of television but he was undeniably the first man in the world to have taken it out of the laboratory stage and to put it into practice. He conceived the desire to dedicate his life to television at Hastings in 1924, and it was whilst walking alone over the cliffs to Fairlight Glen that he filled his mind with a subject to which he devoted all his energies until his death in 1945, at the age of 58.

Exhilarated by the freshness of the sea air in his lungs, and the conception of an idea laden with intriguing possibilities, Baird started operations immediately. He began with the purchase of a tea chest, an old hat box, some darning needles, a bull's eye lens from a local cycle shop and a plentiful supply of ceiling wax and glue. The contraption grew and eventually filled Baird's bedroom. Electric batteries were added to it; wireless valves and transformers appeared, and at last he was able to show the shadow of a small cross transmitted over a few feet. Baird was elated, but here began a problem which haunted him from time to time—money—advertisements for assistance sometimes produced just enough to be able to scrape by, and then, sad to say, Baird was dismissed from his quarters in Hastings.

In rigging up his apparatus one day he was connecting the supply to some part of the wiring when he allowed his attention to wander momentarily—but just long enough to receive the full force of two thousand volts through his hands; it was more than enough to have killed him. For a few seconds the inventor was twisted into a knot of helpless agony, but then fell backwards, breaking the circuit and saving his life. The noise of his fall and the vivid flash of light attracted the attention of passers-by; one of them was a newspaper-man and the story received immediate publicity. In due course Baird received instructions from the Landlord's solicitors to vacate the premises forthwith—that was the end of Hastings. Baird found a little attic at 23, Frith Street, London and he and his contraptions moved there lock, stock and barrel.

Hastings, however, had become immortalized by Baird. The small Maltese cross which he had televised inspired the Hastings Council to erect a plaque at the shop over which Baird had worked, bearing the

following inscription:

“Television. First demonstrated by John Logie  
Baird from experiments started here in 1924.”

The days at Frith Street were fraught with endless worry that the money might run out, as Baird worked frantically on the idea which he knew, even then, could revolutionize the British way of life. Friday, 27 January 1926, when more than forty members of the Royal Institution, most of them distinguished scientists, arrived in Soho in full evening dress, was a red-letter day in Baird's life. They climbed three flights of stone stairs and then stood in a narrow draughty passage while batches of six at a time were brought into two tiny attic rooms which formed the laboratory. The correspondent of *The Times* was present and his article heralded a great achievement; as a result newspaper-men in their dozens began to arrive in Frith Street, those same newspaper-men who sometime before had told Baird that the televising of a small Maltese cross was not in itself the sort of story for which they were looking—they wanted as the subject, a human being. With this in mind Baird had bought a ventriloquist's dummy which he named Bill—Bill was propped up in front of the transmitter and on 2 October 1925 Baird succeeded in getting a recognizable feature of Bill's face; admittedly, blurred, and a trifle jerky, but quite distinguishable, all the same.

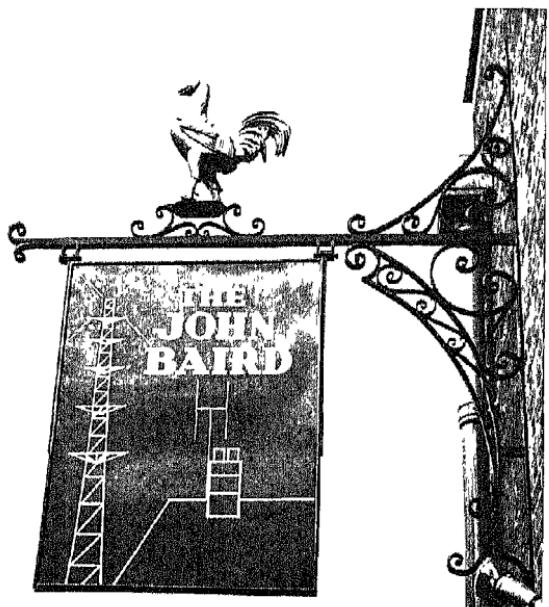
It was at this point that Baird made history by rushing downstairs to a firm of film-renters who occupied the ground-floor office beneath Baird's laboratory and demanding to borrow the office-boy, a said William Taynton. At the tender age of 15 Taynton could be forgiven for viewing the whole situation with trepidation, but he was hauled up under protest, and parked in front of the transmitter; at first the experiment was a dismal failure—Baird was puzzled—with Bill it had worked fairly well. Then Baird noticed that his subject, most apprehensive of the whole thing, had got as far away as he could from the fearsome apparatus and was out of range. He was promptly given half-a-crown (a worth-while sum in those days), told to sit still, duly obliged, and Baird won for himself another plaque; he had accomplished the first transmission of a human form. So in 1925 Baird had established beyond all reasonable doubt that television was a fact, and

primitive as it was then, it had overwhelming possibilities in the future. In February 1926 Baird moved to more suitable premises in Long Acre; a vision was becoming reality.

Early in 1927 Baird began experimenting with colour television, a process that has still not fully emerged from the experimental stage. It is, certainly a talking point and a little surprising, this, in view of the rapid strides made in many other aspects of science. Baird's results in 1927 were fascinating although the pictures were only one inch square; the device was demonstrated at the British Association meeting in Glasgow in 1927—the first occasion on which colour television was shown in public. Baird's invention of ordinary television was now beginning to stir society. The Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald, had a television set installed in Downing Street, and when Baird became a member of The Caledonian Club he installed a receiver there, and subsequently gave a demonstration to the Prince of Wales. The City speculators, too, were forthcoming with their money to back the new invention; as far as the Baird Television Company was concerned, however, it was absolutely vital that they should obtain the fullest co-operation of the British Broadcasting Corporation—the one authority which had exclusive use of the air.

Baird and his associates, and sections of the press, too, expressed themselves strongly about the Corporation's apparent lack of desire to co-operate in the development of a new medium which might conceivably supplant sound radio. The cardinal difference of opinion was quite simple. The Baird group sincerely believed that sufficient advance had been made in the development of television for the B.B.C. to take a hand; the Corporation's view was that it was too much in the embryo stage to warrant their taking it up seriously, and in July, 1928, the B.B.C. issued the following statement:

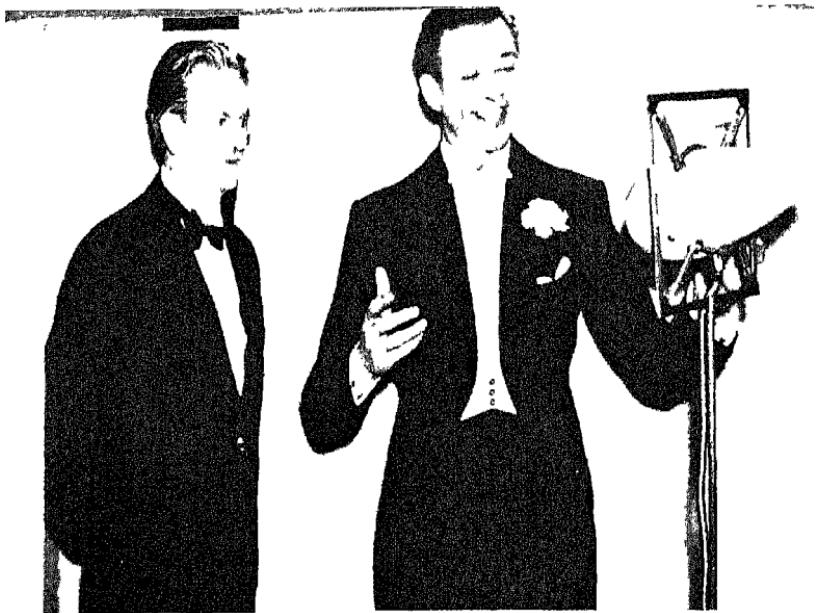
Various statements have been published in connection with the development of television, and rumours are current of the part which the B.B.C. is likely to play. In order that its listeners may not suffer disappointment by anticipating the possibility of seeing as well as hearing its performances, the B.B.C. wishes to make it plain that it has not so far been approached with apparatus of so practical a nature as in the opinion of the Corporation to make television possible on a service basis. It should be noted that the Postmaster-General in replying to questions in the House of



Thirty-four years after BAIRD produced the blurred image of Bill, Courage and Barclay Limited, opened a public house in Muswell Hill named "The John Baird". The inn sign shown in this picture perpetuates the name of the inventor in an area so closely associated with the early days of B.B.C. Television.

Among the guests at the opening of "The John Baird" were FREDERIC MITCHELL, the B.B.C.'s first male announcer in television, seen here with WILLIAM TAYLOR who, as a 15-year-old office boy, was the first human being to be televised in 1925.





JOHN LOGIE BAIRD, son of a Scottish minister, the pioneer of television, with the famous Danish film star, CARL BRISSON, when BRISSON was televised in 1932.

JOHN BAIRD with SYDNEY MOSLEY and SIR HARRY GRIFF. The irrepressible MOSLEY, a remarkable man, worked unceasingly both in this country and America in the cause of Baird Television; he was BAIRD'S closest friend. SIR HARRY GRIFF was Chairman of the Baird Television Company.



Commons had indicated that, in the opinion of his officers, television is still in the experimental stage, and that the time has not yet come to make arrangements for the provision of a public service. When the development of the science has reached a stage where some form of service which will benefit listeners may be guaranteed, the B.B.C. will be prepared, subject to the approval of the Postmaster-General, to co-operate in the matter.

This statement was presumably made in answer to a series of advertisements in which the Baird Television Development Company had announced that it proposed to commence broadcasting its own programmes, for those of the public who owned Baird Combined Wireless and Televisor sets. These broadcasts depended entirely upon being granted a licence by the Postmaster-General. But the B.B.C. held the monopoly, and their public announcement declining to associate themselves at present with television caused a slump in the Baird Company's shares; shares dropped in one fell swoop from 13s 6d to 6s; a rumour that the B.B.C. might after all take a hand caused the shares to rise sharply to 11s 3d; discounting of the rumour sent them tumbling back to 7s 9d.

Whatever the official view was, the newspapers found television development first-class copy. On 6 January 1929 a correspondent of *The People* wrote:

I have just witnessed in the Long Acre studios of Baird Television Development Company a demonstration of the most advanced wireless projection of moving pictures that the world has yet known. In the lens, or glass screen, of the receiving apparatus I could see clearly and vividly the three artistes whose voices came to me simultaneously with their visible movements and expressions. Having followed the progress of Mr Baird's wonderful invention, I am in a position to state that projections have enormously improved even within the past few weeks. Today the time has come when every holder of a wireless licence should be given the fullest possible opportunity of judging television for himself or herself.

In March, 1929 the *Daily Dispatch* was equally enthusiastic:

Great improvements have recently been made in the Baird television apparatus and yesterday morning an official test was made from 2 LO to the General Post Office. The test was witnessed by a large number of B.B.C. engineers and experts. A pretty girl was the person televised. Officials saw her face and at the same time  
T.J.-B

heard her sing. The girl is an employee of the Baird Company and her face televises extremely well. She also has a good voice and has sung at many concerts.

The Postmaster-General, however, was still of the opinion that television was not ready for practicable transmission. But he did offer facilities for progressive experiments. This was great news for John Logie Baird, and when describing the concession granted, Baird said:

It is the beginning of visual wireless for the public. At first the cheapest set will be £12 10s od but as quantities are produced that figure will be lowered. The screen in the set at the start will be only as large as a cigarette-card but this is actually magnified up to the post-card size. Screens in the laboratory are 6 ft  $\times$  3 ft, but at present they will not be available for the public. The sets that we shall sell at £12 10s od will be about the size of a small suitcase.

Alas—negotiations between Baird and the B.B.C. for these progressive experiments failed. The Corporation offered three morning broadcasts weekly, each of a quarter of an hour's duration. The Baird Company insisted that this was inadequate. Eventually on 5 September, Baird Television accepted a new offer from the B.B.C. It was half an hour each day with the exception of Saturdays and Sundays, and so, on 30 September 1929, the B.B.C. made the first public broadcast from the Baird Studios. It was carried out in the Baird Laboratories in Long Acre. The studio was connected by land-line to Savoy Hill's control room, and thence to the 2 LO transmitter, all the announcing and television transmissions taking place from the Baird Studios.

Promptly at eleven o'clock the announcer, Sydney Mosley, came on the screen and a letter was read from the President of the Board of Trade, Sir William Graham, M.P. The machine, alas, chose the moment to break down when the announcer had come to the words, "deeply regret that circumstances prevented me". Happily, a distressing situation was prevented and the entertainment proceeded according to plan. Speeches were made by Sir Ambrose Fleming, the inventor of the valve, and Professor Andrade, and subsequently a light programme was provided by three artistes. One of them was that great comedian and star of a number of hilariously funny films of the thirties—Sydney Howard. His film *Up for the Cup* was one of the big comedy successes of that period.

The general impression gained during this momentous broadcast was that the televiser had reached the state of development of the early flickering cinematograph. There was much, very much to be done, but the present state of affairs was highly creditable, and the fact that public broadcasts were now to be given regularly was considered to enhance the chances of rapid progress. Baird's attention was drawn to the fact that the face of a girl who was giving a musical number came through indistinctly. Baird replied that men's faces televised better than women's.

In March of the following year the B.B.C.'s twin stations at Brookman's Park broadcast sight and sound simultaneously for the first time. One of the artistes has since become a legend in show business. It was Gracie Fields. Lancashire was certainly playing its part in the early days.

On 14 July 1930 the first television play, an adaption of *The Man with a Flower in his Mouth* was broadcast by the B.B.C. from the Baird studios. The announcement of this milestone captured the imagination of the press and it was given plenty of space in the columns of the day. The production, as one paper put it, marks a notable advance in television for hitherto the broadcasts have consisted of the head and shoulders of just one artiste singing or a lecturer talking. In this play, the head and shoulders will be seen of each of the three characters as he or she speaks, and not only will the faces of the actors be seen, but there will also be images of their hands, the gestures they make, the glasses they drink from, and other objects illustrating the dialogue. Fading boards had been made to enable one character to disappear and the next to make his appearance without any unnatural delay. The actors, Mr Val Gielgud (who missed the performance because of illness) and Mr Leslie Millard, and the artiste to be selected for the part of the woman (this was Gladys Young, later to become a first lady of radio drama), will require a certain amount of make-up, the treatment adopted being for the moment similar to that for the cinema, yellow grease-paint being used for the face and blue or dark green for touching up the lips and eyes and the prominent lines of the nose, chin and temples. Red paint is ruled out because when produced by television it is no longer red, but white. Some fifty radio dealers in various parts of the country were offering special facilities for seeing this play. What a review the *Manchester Guardian* gave it. Here it is, in its entirety—

"My experience with the play was unfortunate, for not having a televiser of my own, I had to rely on the apparatus at a multiple store. This could only be seen by one person at a time; as there were over 100 waiting, and as the play lasted thirty minutes, our time before the machine was limited, and I, who was there professionally, as it were, arrived at the screen at the instant of a fade out!"

A few days later, at the Coliseum, the gentleman from the *Guardian* was a good deal more fortunate and saw the whole of a performance which featured Irene Vanbrugh. He wrote: "The images are marred not only by vertical lines but by a swaying motion which gives one the feeling of looking through a cabin keyhole on a rather rough day at sea. This must be admitted in order that television may be judged not as an achievement so much as a possibility in the process of being fulfilled."

One can only presume that his readers had themselves practised looking through cabin keyholes at sea so as to be able to draw the required comparison!

The race for supremacy in television now had a number of competitors in all corners of the globe; scientists' knowledge was increasing not only in the Baird laboratories but also in a dozen research centres upon the Continent and in America, and the B.B.C. thought it necessary to announce that there was no foundation for a rumour that they were about to transmit television operated on a foreign process; the Baird transmissions were to be continued in 1931. Research work was already in progress in the Electrical and Musical Industries laboratories in England and their activities were going to prove that television had its own H. G. Wells. His name was A. A. Campbell Swinton, a British scientist and a Fellow of the Royal Society. In 1908, Campbell Swinton had put on paper his ideas as to how the principle of television could be developed and operated by an all-electric method; he was not able to experiment with his ideas because the equipment in those days was not sufficiently advanced, but, with certain modifications, E.M.I. did, many years later, and the way that television is operated today is amazingly close to what Campbell Swinton had foreseen. His theory provides a vital cog in this story because it does prove that E.M.I. and Baird were working along altogether different lines and it thus kills any impression that the vast resources of E.M.I. were thrown into the fray merely to improve upon a principle which

Baird had established over long and arduous years—years of spade-work and setbacks. It was nothing like this. Baird and E.M.I. were travelling two distinct roads; these two roads converged upon Alexandra Palace in due course.

E.M.I. had many brilliant technicians. The big four were Blumlein and Browne, tragically killed in an air crash during the war, and Dr J. D. McGee and Eric White; these men worked ceaselessly on television development. Alan Blumlein's immense vision, and his outstanding knowledge of communication engineering, may be said to have given the world the system of television, now universal. Two great men were lost on that June day in 1942 when a Halifax bomber burst into flames and plunged to earth.

Several scientists forecast in the early part of 1931 that television would be an accomplished fact in five years' time . . . how right they were.

Television of a purely experimental nature was now being tried in America. Primo Carnera the giant Italian heavy-weight was one of the subjects chosen, and in May of 1931 the American television experts, with a true American flair for showmanship, produced something out of the hat in the way of programme presentations. It was a real live marriage. The announcer began by saying, "Ladies and Gentlemen of the television audience, we have here a novel item and yet one with its serious aspect. It is a marriage." The principals were Miss Grayce Jones and Mr Frank Duvall, whose romance began behind the scenes in the television laboratory. They made their vows before brilliant flickering lights and in front of the microphone. Subscribers enjoyed the spectacle of a bride in white satin and with a tulle veil held by a circlet of orange blossom. The wedding march was perfectly timed and Mr and Mrs Duvall were set upon the path of married bliss as no other happy couple had ever been before. Television weddings have come a long way since that May day in 1931; the televising of the ceremony at the marriage of Prince Rainier of Monaco and Miss Grace Kelly, Hollywood film star, and subsequently the wedding of Princess Margaret, were modern masterpieces of perfection.

It was not long after the wedding ceremony in America that Mr H. A. Lafount, America's Federal Radio Commissioner, said, "I believe that television is destined to become the greatest force in the world. I

think it will have more influence over the lives of individuals than any other force"; he was urging rigid censorship of the pictures being used to avoid immodest broadcasts.

At home, Baird made history in 1931 by televising the Derby. The *Daily Herald* carried this description of the feat—

The result astonished us all. We heard the shouts of the bookmakers, and we saw them waving their arms in frenzied excitement. We could see the horses passing in file; we heard them named by the announcers as they passed. We could almost recognize their jockeys; as we watched we saw the favourite pass slightly ahead of Orpen with Sandwich, Goyescas and Gallini close behind.

Baird had another crack at the Derby in 1932 when in the Metropole Cinema at Victoria on a screen 8 ft high  $\times$  10 ft across viewers saw April the Fifth, the horse of that great English stage and film star, Tom Walls, beat Dastur. Baird stepped on to the stage at the conclusion of the race and the applause was deafening.

Now, advances in the new science were providing the newspapers of the world with one story after another. In July, 1931, the Baird Corporation of America made arrangements with several leading surgeons from one of the big hospitals in New York City, whereby an operation in the theatre was to be seen by students in another part of the building by means of television. In August, for the first time, artistes at the B.B.C. studios were broadcast by television. Formerly, broadcasts had taken place through the Baird Studios in Long Acre, but with a portable transmitter having been installed by the B.B.C. itself, it enabled artistes broadcasting through the B.B.C. to be simultaneously televised. Three months later more television history was made when Jack Payne and his band broadcast from Savoy Hill—the very first televised programme put out by the B.B.C. It was dependent on land-lines and showed only four figures at a time. The receiving instruments before which Jack Payne stood were quite terrifying. Pointing at him was the long snout of a metal box projecting vivid pale blue light on a screen. This was the rotating mirror drum transmitter whose function was to split up his image into strips of light for the photo-electric cells to receive, which they duly did, transmitting it in terms of electric energy. In the next room, which was darkened, was the image of Jack Payne flashing and flickering like an early screen figure. He

was about half postcard size and there was a sort of reddish halo round his head and shoulders.

What would television do next? In February, 1932, it accomplished quite a remarkable achievement. A party of radio and television experts received the normal television transmission broadcast from the B.B.C. station at Brookman's Park, whilst they were travelling on a moving train. No special apparatus was necessary; a four valve portable receiver was coupled to a Baird televiser. The train touched speeds up to seventy miles an hour between Sandy and Huntingdon, but the dancer could still be seen. This was the first test of its kind in the world.

Four months later, the first British film star to make a "talkie" in this country—John Stuart, took part in the first televised cinema show with Heather Angel. From the Baird Studios in Long Acre they were televised to the Metropole Cinema, Victoria, and thrown upon a large screen clearly visible to an audience of nearly 2,000 people. Mr Stuart said afterwards that he would rather make a film than be televised because the dazzling light in his eyes made him feel unwell.

On 22 August 1932, the B.B.C. took a major step in the promotion of television. Towards the end of 1931 they had been so impressed by the possibilities which television held, that they had bought from the Baird Company all the necessary equipment to enable them to establish their own studio with their own staff producers and technicians. It was on 22 August that Studio BB, originally intended for Henry Hall's dance orchestra, was re-allocated for television; and so, in the basement of Broadcasting House, Studio BB was the real beginning of it all. The installation of the equipment was supervised by Douglas Birkinshaw, a brilliant scientific engineer and Cambridge graduate, who had been appointed to the first post ever created by the B.B.C. in connection with television; it was that of Research Engineer. The two men from the Baird organization responsible for installing the equipment, D. R. Campbell and T. H. Bridgewater, subsequently joined Birkinshaw on the staff of the B.B.C. Here, then, were the three wise men on the technical side of B.B.C. television; we shall do well to remember the enormous part they played in changing history. Birkinshaw, Bridgewater, Campbell. The first letters of their names produce—B.B.C.

A near-miracle was performed in November, 1932, when Carl

Brisson, the Danish film star, was televised from Broadcasting House, Portland Place, to the Arena Theatre, Copenhagen, 600 miles away. The screen used in Denmark was 7 ft  $\times$  3 ft. John Baird was introduced by Brisson at the end of his performance, which had been an encouraging success.

Continued progress was made in 1933; new and varied items were televised from time to time but although the novelty of the whole thing excited the public, that is the small section of the public which followed these broadcasts, the quality of the transmission was still the main point at issue between the various companies developing the science, and the B.B.C., upon whom considerable pressure was being exerted to begin a regular service, or at least, to take a far more active part in the proceedings. An *Evening News* reporter was present when television entertainment took another step in the right direction. He wrote, "I have just been present at the final rehearsal of the first television revue, *Looking In* by John Watt and Harry Pepper which will be broadcast tonight. It is a continuous half-hour's performance in which about a dozen people take part including Anona Winn."

This was certainly a sign of progress . . . but what of the transmission itself? The *Daily Telegraph* was not impressed.

Whilst demonstrating the remarkable technical progress made in transmission the reception of the performance clearly showed that stage performances cannot yet be regarded as an ideal subject for television. The most satisfactory numbers were those in which the artistes stood still right in front of the televiser. The smallness and comparative haziness of the images shown on the screen made it necessary for the artistes to use extremely heavy make-up to emphasize their features. The spectacular aspect of the ordinary stage revue cannot be transmitted at all. This performance must, in short, be regarded rather as a highly interesting experiment than as entertainment.

Mick The Miller, most famous of all greyhounds, made his television bow. Fred Perry, in a broadcast, referred to the possibility of demonstrating tennis strokes on television, and animals from the London Zoo were brought to the studio—the first time that the Zoological Society had ever consented to any of their inmates leaving their quarters. What a great part animals have since played in television programmes—David Attenborough, Peter Scott, Armand and Michacla Denis.

One of the funniest early animal stories in the life of B.B.C. television involved Birkinshaw, the engineer, and the producer, Eustace Robb, a former Guards officer. Robb hit upon the idea of televising a sea-lion which was then appearing at the Victoria Palace; arrangements were made for it to be released after its evening performance to travel to Broadcasting House to face the television cameras, the operative word being "travel". How was it to be transported from one place to the other? A couple of taxi-drivers were sounded and turned down the proposed cargo. Birkinshaw, the proud owner of a large open car, a Panhard Lavassor, the equivalent of a French Daimler, nobly stepped into the breach and duly arrived at the Victoria Palace; a small crowd gathered when they saw a sea-lion flopping across the pavement to the waiting car, and the fun started when the animal took a couple of sniffs at the vehicle, decided for one reason or another that it didn't fancy it at all, and turned back towards the comfort of the Palace. Its trainer quickly entered the car and, happily, the faithful animal turned about and scrambled up on the seat beside him. There was no need for the driver to make any periodic checks on the way to see if the sea-lion was still there—its whiskers repeatedly tickled his neck as he drove through London's streets!

To appreciate fully their arrival at Broadcasting House one has to set the scene. The building in those days had a great air of sanctity about it (and still has, for that matter) and most of the staff looked disapprovingly upon what went on in Studio BB, where make-up transformed quite reasonable human beings into circus clowns. It was the last straw that broke the camel's back when a car of some distinction drew up, and a sea-lion paddled its way into the portals of an Empire over which Sir John Reith ruled with great dignity and composure. Really, these television people are the absolute limit! But our friend the sea-lion was amazingly calm about it all; he followed his owner into the lift without fuss, and considering that there had been no time for rehearsal, performed splendidly, just like a seasoned trouper; he blew a saxophone, waggled his flippers at a delighted gathering (and viewers, too) and was finally delivered back from whence he came by the same method of transportation—up in' the lift, through the door (Thank heaven for that!) and away. Birkinshaw had saved the day. This was one of the earliest examples of the close co-operation which has

existed through the years between the producing and technical staffs of the B.B.C.!

What a surprise the B.B.C. had in store for viewers in August, 1933—they televised a boxing match. Two contests were staged in a 12 ft ring erected in the studio. One fight was between Freddie Baxter and Bill Lewis both of Bethnal Green; the other between Laurie Raiteri and Archie Sexton. The programme was introduced by Viscount Scarsdale and Jim Mollison. It was boxing with a difference as the usual bright lights were missing. The boxers found this a little disturbing to begin with, but said afterwards that it was possible to get used to boxing in the dim light necessary for television. As far as the production was concerned a curious effect was noticed at times which gave an impression of gliding. On one occasion, for instance, when Lewis neatly side-stepped Baxter, a correspondent commented that he was irresistibly reminded of Charlie Chaplin on the skating rink! So much for the first television programme which brought the boxing ring to the fireside.

A couple of weeks before this fight was staged the B.B.C. had caused intense speculation as to the future of television. It brought about a buzz of fear and consternation among manufacturers, not to mention the City speculators who by this time had sunk a good deal of money in the new science. The announcement which threw the cat amongst the pigeons was quite a simple one. It was this:

The B.B.C. is most anxious to know the number of people who are actually seeing this television programme. Will those who are looking in send a post-card marked "Z" to Broadcasting House immediately. This information is of considerable importance.

What was behind this request? Was it that the executives of the B.B.C. were divided in their midst on the future of television—was there an element of doubt—supposing the response to this appeal was negligible, would it mean the shelving of television? Television shares fell sharply as the City watched with no small amount of apprehension. The result of this poll was never made public, and when the B.B.C. announced a month later that it was to terminate the exclusive agreement with Baird Television when it expired on 31 March 1934, quite a serious view was taken in certain quarters. . . . It was a storm in a tea-cup. The B.B.C. had no intention of closing down; they were

merely concerned with finding out the best method of transmission. They had decided beyond doubt that no place could be found for television within the ordinary range of broadcasting wave-lengths which would permit television broadcasts on a scale similar to the sound radio already in existence. To transmit television pictures of fine detail required a wider band of frequencies than was available in the medium broadcasting range. It was generally agreed that the television of the future would be accomplished by means of ultra short-wave sending stations elevated on a tower or a hill. A public demonstration of ultra short-wave television had been given by the Baird organization between their premises in Long Acre and the roof of Selfridges; subsequently the B.B.C. used this method from the top of Broadcasting House.

In October the B.B.C. came out with a statement of policy which set anxious minds at rest. They proposed to carry out experiments of high definition television. The first test, to be conducted with apparatus installed by Baird Television, was to continue until the end of 1933; the second series which was to begin in January, 1934, was to make use of equipment installed by E.M.I. The present 30-line transmissions radiated by the London National transmitter were to continue until the date of expiry of the existing arrangements with Baird. The 30-line system was considered outmoded, as experiments were now being carried out with 60, 90, 120, and even 180 lines; the B.B.C. apparently took the view that at about 120, television became a worth-while proposition. All the difficulties in the television field at that moment were concerned with the transmission side of it; radio manufacturers were ready and able to supply receivers as soon as a system with a wide appeal to the public was made available; at least three manufacturers had produced designs which could be used for mass production of television receivers as soon as the B.B.C. decided what service they would adopt. Television was becoming big business. Two powerful rivals were in the market bidding for the support of the B.B.C.—Baird Television Limited on the one hand; Electric and Musical Industries Limited on the other. Both were backed by big financial interests and the Baird Company had obtained a licence from the Postmaster-General to broadcast experimentally from one of the towers of the Crystal Palace; these towers were three-quarters of a mile apart—

a fair distance on a tight-rope, but it was once covered in such a fashion by the amazing Blondin, who at the time had apparently got tired of Niagara Falls!

The possible effect of these developments was considered to be far reaching not only to the radio industry but also to the cinema and musical business, as the apparatus then being produced was capable of giving good reproductions of films in their entirety on screens at home. People were already wondering whether this new form of amusement would intensify the competition with outdoor amusements already existing as a result of ordinary wireless. This view was perhaps new then; now, it is an old chestnut. Sound radio was going to kill the gramophone once upon a time; television was going to kill sound radio, and even if sound radio had failed to gobble up the gramophone, then television certainly would; so far, there has been no gobbling up of anything. What effect has television had on outside sport? Considerable, of course, but not necessarily damaging . . . on the contrary it has stimulated tremendous interest in some of the lesser known sports such as show-jumping and swimming. What home these days has never heard of Pat Smythe?

Just when all parties were settling down to this period of solid experiment there came another scare . . . even bigger than the last. It was the *Daily Express* this time, and here was the scare in headlines.

There will be no television transmissions from the B.B.C. this week. The reason is that the television studio is being moved from Broadcasting House to 16, Portland Place, where a large studio has been constructed to permit bigger background scenes to be televised. Transmissions will be resumed on the night of February 26 on the three programmes a week basis, but after the end of March they will be cut down to two a week. They may disappear altogether from the programme later, for the listening public has failed to take a practical interest in television. Last year the B.B.C. attempted to take a post-card census of the numbers of lookers-in. No detailed information about the result is obtainable but it is known that the figures painfully surprised even the most pessimistically minded at Broadcasting House.

Enthusiasts were up in arms—again without foundation. The B.B.C. had already decided that the future of television lay with the methods then being tried, namely, the ultra short-wave transmissions, the

cathode ray tube, and the cinema film as an intermediary between entertainment and audience.

It was at about this time that Baird Television struck another memorable note on the occasion of the Fifth Ordinary General Meeting of the Company held at Film House, Wardour Street, on 20 March 1934. The chairman, Sir Harry Greer, was not present at Wardour Street. He was, instead, installed at the Crystal Palace and began his address by saying, "My Lords, Ladies and Gentlemen, I realize that this is a Chairman's speech which will make history, not necessarily because of its oratorial excellence but because of the method of its delivery. I am in the south tower of the Crystal Palace while you are in Film House in Wardour Street, yet you should hear my words and see my face as clearly as if I were in the room with you. It is the first time that a Chairman's speech has ever been made under these conditions, and I have chosen this method as the most dramatic way of bringing home to you the fact that Baird Television has emerged from the experimental stage and has definitely arrived!"

Sir Harry went on to say that he had a fast car waiting and would be in Wardour Street in time to answer questions. Times have changed, a fast car now in London's traffic would scarcely be in time for the following year's meeting!

A move for real progress was made when a committee was set up under the chairmanship of Lord Selsdon to advise the Postmaster-General on the merits of various forms of transmission. The results of these findings were expected to be announced in January, 1935. Roughly £10,000,000 was at stake in the television war, as manufacturers were fighting for the supremacy of the ether. During the last few weeks of 1934 all was quiet, at least openly. It was the lull before the storm in January when the committee's findings were expected to be announced. Which way was the cat going to jump? It was quite a cat, now, too.

The report of the Television Committee was issued as a White Paper in January, 1935; it consisted of twenty-eight pages and cost 6d. If you were concerned financially or otherwise with television then this was 6d well spent, for in its wording the report, although cautious, advised positive action. It stated:

While the establishment of a television service should be, in our

opinion, the aim, we do not feel we can advise you to proceed at once to approve the construction at great expense of a network of stations intended to cover most of the country. The total number of stations required for such a purpose is as yet unknown to anyone; and the total cost is accordingly purely speculative. Moreover, television will be a constantly developing art and new discoveries and improvements will certainly involve continued modifications of methods—at least during its early years. A general service will only be reached, step by step, but the steps should be as frequent as possible and in our opinion the first step should be taken now.

The first step should be taken "now"; it was the "now" that mattered most. One vital conclusion reached by the committee was that in view of the close relationship between sound and television broadcasting the authority which was responsible for sound should also be entrusted with television. This put television, once and for all, upon the plate of the British Broadcasting Corporation. It was further suggested that a start should be made by the establishment of a service in London with two television systems operating alternately from one transmitting station, and that Baird Television and Marconi-E.M.I. (Marconi and E.M.I. having pooled their sound and visual knowledge of television) should be given an opportunity to supply the necessary apparatus.

There was one curious reaction to the advent of television as a serious business. The Postmaster-General, Sir Kingsley-Wood, found it necessary to broadcast an assurance that television did not involve the possibility of looking into other people's houses. The belief that television would enable this to be done was a popular idea growing in many people's minds. Were the television cameras to be Peeping Toms prying in through the windows of honest and honourable citizens? They were not—a man's home is his castle and what he did within its walls was to remain strictly his own business.

With the Baird organization installed in the south tower of the Crystal Palace, the B.B.C. chose Alexandra Palace as London's transmitting station. Both these giant constructions with a great emphasis on glass had been built from the materials of the second International Exhibition held at South Kensington in 1862. Alexandra Palace was opened in 1873 and lasted only a fortnight before it was gutted by

fire, a fate which was to befall the Crystal Palace sixty-three years later. The present version of Alexandra Palace was completed in 1875 and contained besides a skating rink, a dance hall and concert room, and a gigantic organ in the centre transept.

In September, 1935 an era of television came to an end when the B.B.C. closed down the 30-line broadcasts. This old system was now scrapped, all sets in existence became obsolete, a hard price for viewers to pay in the cause of progress. Lydia Sokolova, prima ballerina, had the honour of being the last artiste to be transmitted by low definition television. There was no transmitting for the next few months whilst Alexandra Palace was preparing to launch the next phase in television broadcasting. This was another lull before a storm, but a storm of a different kind blew up when the *Daily Telegraph* announced one day that the B.B.C. was seeking a super woman. Since the birth of civilization super women have been sought, but as far as one is aware, no established pattern has been agreed as to what ingredients, when skilfully blended, produce a finished feminine masterpiece.

Largely, of course, one man's meat is another man's poison, but at least the British Broadcasting Corporation was bold enough to reveal what it regarded as the virtues the super woman must possess. She must have super personality, charm, tact, a mezzo voice and a good memory; she must be as acceptable to women as to men, she must photograph well, must not have red hair and MUST NOT be married. It was these qualities which were essential to a television announcer, for it was as an announcer that the super woman was required. The question of red hair involved technicalities; apparently red did not transmit satisfactorily, and this insistence enraged more than a few red-headed beauties who fancied themselves for the job. It was just as well that this bar on red hair had not been enforced in the world of the cinema; what a tragedy it would have been if cinema-goers had never seen the fabulous Clara Bow. Married women were barred as television announcers because of the exacting nature of the work. It was not made clear whether the exacting nature referred to the marriage side of their affairs or to television announcing! The result . . . a whirlwind, nothing less. Sackfuls of mail arrived, extra staff was needed to handle it, and cablegrams poured in from New Zealand, Australia and America. The world was simply full of super women! A harassed

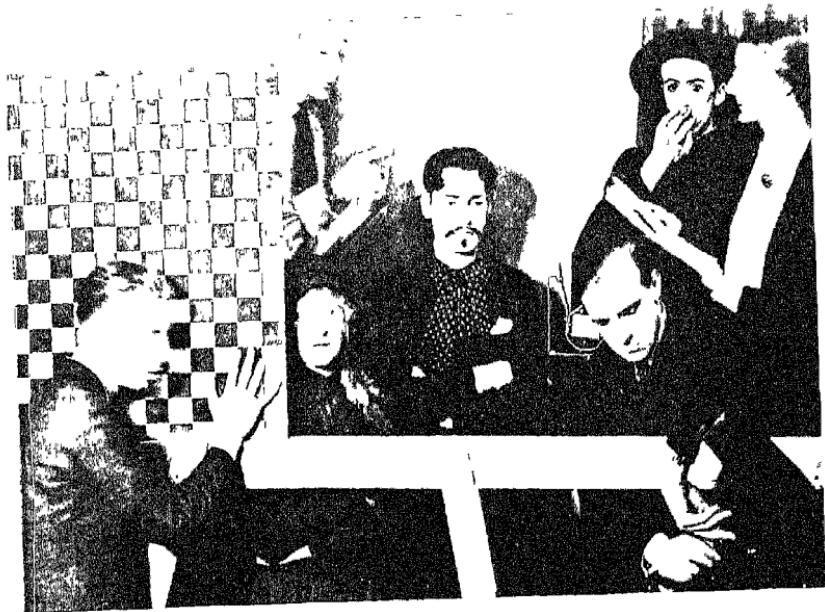
B.B.C. soon cried "Enough" . . . and no more applications were considered.

It was not until May, 1936 that the wheat had been sorted from the chaff, and two names were revealed which were to make history, the names of Jasmine Bligh and Elizabeth Cowell. Miss Bligh, a daughter of the Hon. Mis Noel Bligh and a nice of Earl Darnley, lived in Upper Berkeley Street. Miss Cowell, her home in Cambridge, was living in Chelsea. It was quite bewildering for them when they were hurled into a Press Conference, but remembering the stipulation that they must be as acceptable to women as to men, it is quite enlightening to record what Margaret Lane wrote in the *Daily Mail*.

Miss Bligh is tall, statuesque, really beautiful in the dignified Edwardian manner; Miss Cowell is slight, quick with a lively face which one would call "chic". One has blue eyes, the other brown. Both have pleasant voices, easy manners and were discreetly dressed in sober black and white.

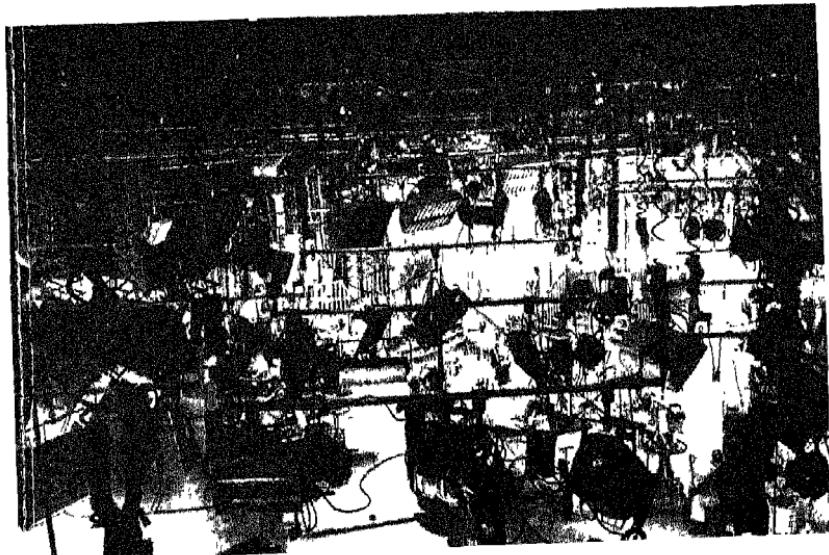
Two young ladies had thus come through a most trying ordeal, of which they have both admitted to being terrified, with flying colours. Miss Bligh's family, incidentally, has a high place of honour in the history of world cricket. Her grandfather, the Hon. Ivo Bligh, who later became Earl Darnley, led the England cricket team to Australia in the winter of 1882-3, and it was on this tour, after England had won two Test matches to Australia's one, that some ladies burnt a stump, sealed its ashes in an urn, and presented it to the English captain. The urn remained his private property until his death in 1927. It was then bequeathed in his will to the M.C.C. The urn has remained at Lord's ever since, no matter whether England or Australia hold the famous Ashes. In later years television has captured some of the epic moments in these titanic struggles upon the green fields of England.

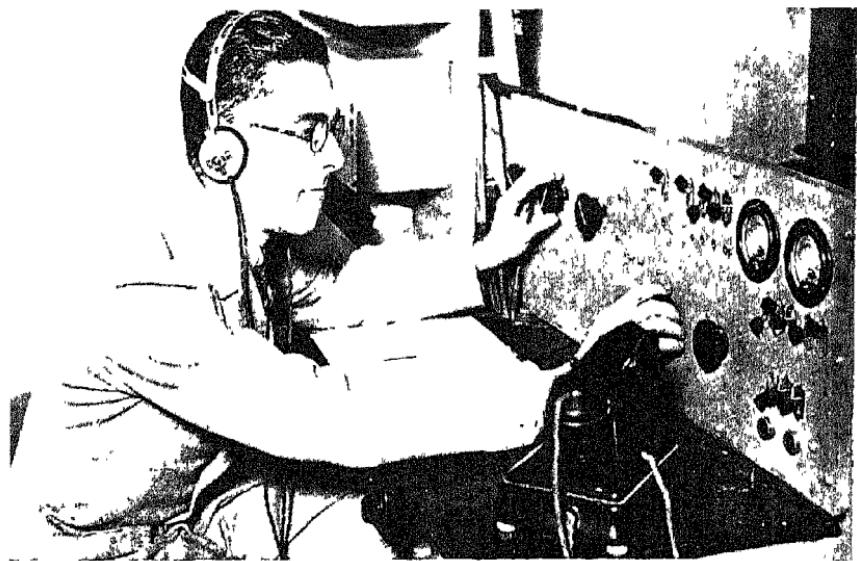
With the appointment of Jasmine Bligh and Elizabeth Cowell on contracts of six months' duration, each containing a clause which prohibited them from marrying or travelling abroad, the B.B.C. now concerned themselves with the appointment of a male Adonis to complete the triumvirate of announcers. Six hundred males applied for the post; it was eventually filled by one of the B.B.C.s own staff—Leslie Mitchell, who had joined as an announcer in 1934. All that was needed now was a television service—that was all!



The first play in the world to be televised, in July 1930 Pirandello's *The Man with a Flower in his Mouth*. From left to right - GEORGE INNS (now producer of "The Black and White Minstrel Show"), FANCY SIEVEKING (producer), GLADYS YOUNG, LARI GRAY, C. DENIS FRIMAN, LIONEL MILLARD and MARY EVERETT.

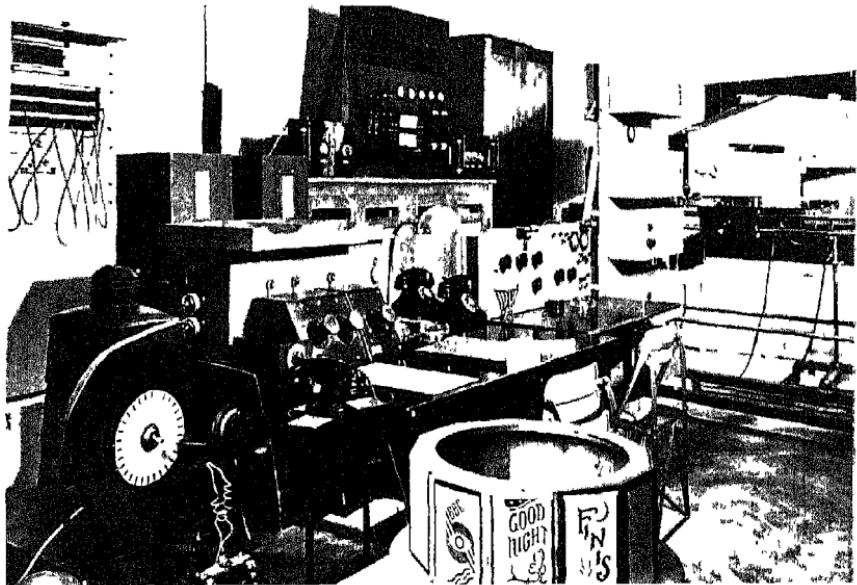
In contrast, this picture shows the conglomeration of equipment during the televising of a play in the new studio in the Television Centre in 1960. There will be at least four cameras in use, three sound-booms, three or four monitor sets dotted about the place and sound speakers to enable records of music to be heard.





In 1932 the B B C made the first television appointment to its staff. DOUGLAS BIRKINSHAW, a brilliant Cambridge graduate, was given the post of Research Engineer, Television. Now he is Superintendent Engineer of the Television Service. This photograph, taken in August, 1932, shows BIRKINSHAW at the television control panel used in those pioneering days.

This was the B B C's Television Control Room at 16 Portland Place, in 1935, with the caption apparatus in the foreground.



## CHAPTER II: THE RADIO SHOW IN 1936

*Baird and Marconi-E.M.I. equipment goes in at Alexandra Palace . . . Birkinshaw keeps the peace . . . sudden decision to put on Television at the Radio Show in August, 1936 . . . a shut down of regular programmes is necessary to take stock of affairs, but "Picture Page" is born.*

A BATTLE of life and death was now about to be fought between the Baird Company and Marconi-E.M.I. Both began installing their equipment at Alexandra Palace; Birkinshaw, the B.B.C.s original research engineer, now appointed as engineer-in-charge at Alexandra Palace, watched like a hawk. Birkinshaw needed to be more than a technician; he needed to be a man of peacemaking equal in stature to a Lord Birkett. So much was at stake for these companies that neither was too ready to part with information about their own apparatus lest it should fall into enemy hands; yet it was essential that the B.B.C. should be in the picture in every detail. Each company was seeing the other's equipment for the first time. Baird probably knew less about E.M.I.s progress than they knew about his, for whilst Baird had thrived on publicity—of which he had plenty—the E.M.I. Company declined to advertise their technical feats to the world. Any vital step towards television development made in their laboratories was never announced publicly and only their own technicians were aware of such a landmark. This undoubtedly accounts for an often accepted impression that Marconi-E.M.I. suddenly jumped into the field and pipped Baird on the post. Baird, a romantic figure, was a name on everybody's lips; the masses thought of no other name when television was mentioned. Baird's approach to marketing his invention was diametrically opposed to E.M.I. since Baird was a great believer in staging some remarkable television event, and hoping with the weight

of publicity, to convince the public, and the authorities too, that television was at once ready for universal transmission—ready for every home in the country to think in terms of installing a television receiver.

Baird's tremendous feat of televising on board the *Berengaria* in mid-Atlantic was a case in point, a transmission performed on the old 30-line system; it has never been achieved since. Thus Baird was first once again in a particular field, but it was not a field which had great practical value at that time; far more important was the development of ordinary processes which would produce television of a high enough standard in British homes—not on liners at sea.

What the two rivals had to offer at Alexandra Palace was altogether different in principle. Baird had three alternatives, all giving pictures on 240 lines, and each one requiring different make-up for the artistes being televised. The three alternatives were intermediate film, the spotlight system, and the electron camera. In make-up, intermediate film called for a thick-yellowish foundation with grey eye shadow and red lips; the spotlight method needed a yellowish face, bright sky blue lips and eyelids, and the electron camera demanded a light ochre face with brown lips, eyelids and eyebrows. Many of the pioneers of those hectic days of 1936 have said that it was as near a circus as makes no difference; how appropriate then that the artistes themselves were painted up to look like clowns! Imagine picking Jasmine Bligh and Elizabeth Cowell from 1,100 beautiful women and then presenting them to the viewing public with a yellowish face, bright sky blue lips, eyelids and eyebrows. But the camera apparently did the trick in these conditions. I might perhaps permit myself a little aside at this point merely to stress just what marvels the television camera could perform even in 1936. Jasmine Bligh once told me that if she had been to a late party the previous evening—and looked a bit like it the next day—a friendly camera-man whose name shall remain in the mists of antiquity, used to put a piece of gauze over the camera which produced highly satisfactory results! Improvisation and great skill have always been the virtues of the man behind the camera.

The intermediate film process seemed to have the greatest disadvantages of Baird's three methods. The film was taken in the studio and passed through a developing tank and scanned while still wet by a

Nipkow disc through the side of a glass tank, a process which took sixty-four seconds. This meant that anyone who had been televised could rush into the next room and see the result coming through. In order to synchronize the accompanying sound, the sound had to be recorded on the film beside the pictures. Legend has it that a B.B.C. orchestra was once being televised by intermediate film, and the musicians, having got wind of just how the thing worked, made an undignified scramble out of the studio as soon as their programme had finished so as to see the results of their labours on the magic screen. The 'cello player, complete with instrument, became wedged in the doorway with some of his fellow players; serious music lost its dignity altogether!

The spotlight system was ideal for close-ups; many people thought that the spotlight produced some of the best pictures of either Baird or the E.M.I. Company, but this too had certain difficulties in presentation, because it required the rest of the studio to be in complete darkness whilst the spotlight was in use. This was a hazard for announcers, especially when young and inexperienced. Elizabeth Cowell, speaking of her first experience of the spotlight said "It really was a bit terrifying. My sensations were most curious—I felt that I was talking to myself in the dark, but I enjoyed my first appearance tremendously once the feeling of eeriness had worn off."

The electron camera, the third Baird process, was not as far advanced as his other methods, and in this fact lies perhaps the whole root of Baird's troubles. Did he delay too much in experimenting with the electronic system of television and persist for too long in the mechanical side? Many think that he did, and yet looking back one can readily appreciate why Baird was reluctant to throw out a process he had invented and on which he had spent ten valuable years of his life; his Maltese cross, Bill, William Taynton, the *Berengaria* had all become immortalized by a mechanical system of television. It was hard to toss the whole idea overboard, but as far back as 1931 one man was quite certain that the mechanical methods were doomed to failure. The man was E. T. S. Walton (now Professor of Physics at Trinity College, Dublin, and who shared a Nobel prize with Sir John Cockcroft). He said "If television is to be done successfully it must be by using cathode ray tubes—the mechanical methods are doomed to failure."

Walton made these remarks to J. D. McGee, who was then a nuclear physics research student in the Cavendish laboratory, Cambridge. McGee began looking for a job during the worst part of the 1931 depression; jobs were hard to find. Eventually he was offered a post by the newly formed E.M.I. Company who were rebuilding their research staff to tackle television. When the offer was finally made McGee's supervisor, Dr (now Sir James) Chadwick said "Oh well, McGee, you had better take it. I doubt if this television will ever amount to much, but at any rate it will keep you going until we can get you a proper job."

McGee joined his new company on 1 January 1932; he never needed that better job, and stayed with E.M.I. to develop the cathode ray tube, with the written words of Campbell Swinton as his inspiration. By the time the B.B.C. were operating at Alexandra Palace in 1936, McGee and his many colleagues had produced the emitron camera . . . the emitron camera was to win the battle of television, and a little over a year later a much improved camera tube—the super emitron—was put into service. This had so much greater light sensitivity that it enabled outside broadcasts to be done in poor winter daylight for the first time.

There were stresses and strains for the Marconi-E.M.I. technicians at Alexandra Palace just as much as there were for Baird's men. The emitrons, although they worked, were still erratic and short-lived and gave pictures which had an unpleasant tone gradation due to the camera tubes being too sensitive to the extreme red and infra-red light of the picture. About this time Dr Leonard Klatzow made his big contribution—a photo-sensitive mosaic which had little infra-red sensitivity, and this produced a great improvement in the quality of the pictures; at Alexandra Palace, E.M.I. were still living from hand to mouth with tubes and had to run a shuttle service from Hayes to replace tubes at short notice.

Both the Baird and Marconi-E.M.I. systems could be used on a single receiver by means of a simple switching operation without unduly complicating or increasing the cost of receivers. It had been hoped that a single radio-vision transmitter might be constructed which would be suitable for all systems, but while it would have been possible for one set of radio transmitters to act for both systems, each company preferred

to build their own vision transmitters, sharing, however, the aerial, high-frequency feeder line, and sound transmitter.

Alexandra Palace, then, was a hive of activity; it might have been Alamein before a desert battle; urgency and expectation prevailed, although the urgency was not quite as urgent as subsequent events demanded. Gerald Cock, the first B.B.C. Director of Television, had told his staff in August that they would not need to produce a programme for several months . . . he then took a lightning decision to televise from Alexandra Palace for the benefit of Radiolympia . . . it was no less than ten days ahead. The news was received coolly . . . and only pandemonium resulted! But it was "orderly" pandemonium. To Cecil Madden it was nothing more than a challenge; nothing more than part of an ordinary day's work. Madden's title was programme organizer. Today he is assistant to the Controller. He is, after twenty-five years, "Mr Television"; most of all, he is a perfectionist. Madden's philosophy is that because nothing is better than the best, he will settle for the best, a remarkable man who would have been an ideal subject for "This is Your Life". His life was in fact chosen, but news of a recording which Greer Garson had made on his behalf for the performance fell into Madden's hands beforehand. The B.B.C.s integrity was at stake and so the programme was cancelled. Madden, creator of innumerable stars, has the world of show business as his friends, never misses a first night worth its salt, and because the day only contains twenty-four hours he has to plan his life accordingly. Such was the character of the man entrusted with making a success of the television side of Radiolympia in 1936.

When Madden walked into his new office at Alexandra Palace it contained no furniture of any description; it merely had a telephone which happened to be ringing as he entered. He lifted the receiver and that move launched television; the caller was Gerald Cock, who said simply—"Madden, I have agreed to put on television for Radiolympia in ten days' time. The exhibition runs ten days, so you will need twenty programmes." This was a tall order for all concerned; it was carried out faithfully; this, alone, was a great triumph of ingenuity, hard work and determination; all, incidentally, attributes of Madden, all shared by his colleagues during those frantically exciting days. Ronald Hill was commissioned to produce the lyrics and music for a theme song;

which he completed in the nick of time. He called it "Here's Looking at You" and it was sung by Helen MacKay. Madden engaged The Three Admirals, comedy singers from the show *Anything Goes*; the Griffith Brothers (Pogo the Horse) with Miss Lutie; Chilton and Thomas, dancers, supported by the television orchestra conducted by Hyam Greenbaum. During the run of the exhibition the orchestra acquired a new second violin—none less than Eric Robinson, like Madden, another stalwart who has weathered twenty-five years of television and looks younger now than when he began!

I might be forgiven once again for wandering slightly off course to tell another Madden story although it concerns sound radio. During the war, the Glenn Miller orchestra of sixty-eight pieces arrived in England. Madden, with the responsibility of housing them, deposited this important contribution to the welfare of troops into a large house in Chelsea. German bombers gave them a hot first night and the musicians refused to stay. Before night fell on the next day, Madden had found alternative accommodation in Bedford; the orchestra left at once in Service lorries. That night the residence in Chelsea was completely demolished; a whole orchestra had been saved. When safely in Bedford one of the Glenn Miller band met three girls who had come in from Northampton with the idea of forming a vocal trio. The musician knew only one Englishman in show business—Cecil Madden. Not long afterwards Madden's office door opened and, without a word of warning, three girls swept in and burst into song. They asked Cecil Madden what he thought of the act: he must have been impressed . . . the three girls were the Beverley Sisters. They made their television debut on 8 June 1946.

Day followed day at Alexandra Palace with alarming speed; problems came with monotonous regularity and had to be overcome; scenery, lighting, and technical snags were constantly cropping up and lessons learned in the light of hard experience; some lessons did not produce the right answer in time and only providence held the key. Eventually the bare framework of nine days before had taken positive shape.

On 23 August, the press were invited to view the scene of preparations. The *Daily Telegraph* regarded the visit as one long to be remembered. Their correspondent wrote:

For two reasons, yesterday will long be remembered in the annals of the B.B.C. Officially it was notable because a party of visitors was allowed to inspect the new Television Headquarters at Alexandra Palace.

Equally memorable to experienced B.B.C. visitors, however, was the fact that for the first time on record, the refreshments provided were not teetotal. Broadcasting House is strictly dry. No wines, spirits or beers are served in its restaurant or subterranean café. But Alexandra Palace is apparently considered sufficiently remote for liquor to be produced on officially festive occasions without any deleterious effect on morale.

A demonstration was given to privileged persons the day before the official opening and was reported in the *Morning Post*.

Yesterday's first demonstration of television over the air from Alexandra Palace at Olympia, London, began in tragic comedy and ended in triumph. First, it appears, a fuse blew at the Palace, a quickly remediable mishap which may befall any piece of technical equipment. At about the same time the electrical equipment at Olympia began to give trouble. The connection of eight viewing booths to a single aerial necessitated amplification. The transformer required refused to work.

The result, half an hour later, was the appearance of a newsreel showing recent happenings in Spain, but liberally bespattered with dancing spots of light. Moreover, only one out of the eight receivers could be used at a time. Then, two hours after the demonstration had been due to begin, we saw real television. We saw a close-up, with the sheen of a woman's hair almost as clearly reflected as in photography. We saw a man in his shirt-sleeves in a studio with a clarity which no previous demonstration had suggested would be possible. We saw dancing and supper table scenes from the film *It's a Girl* with Miss Jessie Matthews as sharply portrayed as any critic could wish. Most impressive of all, we saw daylight scenes shot from the balcony of Alexandra Palace in the failing light of 7.45 p.m. on a late August evening.

This surely was great enough encouragement for everyone concerned with the grand opening, which took place as scheduled on 26 August. There were two notable absents—the two lady announcers. Jasmine Bligh had been operated on for appendicitis and Elizabeth Cowell was suffering from a throat infection. Leslie Mitchell thus began at Radiolympia as the only announcer, and a gold coin was

spun to decide whether the Baird or Marconi-E.M.I. system should have the honour of relaying the first transmission. Baird won the toss, and from then on, the two companies were used alternately. So it was Baird and Leslie Mitchell who set the ball rolling.

Mitchell was a man of experience even of television, gained when he was an actor, and he had been on the staff of the B.B.C. for a couple of years, first as an announcer, and then in the variety department under Eric Maschwitz as a producer and compere; Leslie Mitchell was worth his weight in gold as this great adventure into the unknown began, for no matter how skilled were the technicians, programme organizers, make-up experts and camera-men, they were, to all intents and purposes, grappling in the dark with something entirely new. Once, for instance, it was suddenly found that a woman's dress in a certain colour televised as if she had got nothing on at all. This, of course, would have done irreparable damage to the high standard of morals of the B.B.C.!

Like Elizabeth Cowell, Leslie Mitchell has stories to tell of the spotlight system when announcers were completely in the dark. A stage hand stood each side of him in the blackness and the first gave him a dig in the ribs when the picture was on the air, and he received a second dig from the other gentleman when the sound was on. This improvised and rather Heath Robinson method of signalling readiness, did not necessarily appeal to the announcer, who swears that the two men concerned must have been recruited from the Ring, Blackfriars, for their main attribute was heavy-handedness. This provoked a sick feeling more than once. It was hardly the best method of putting the announcer in the mood; after all, a good solid punch in the ribs has little practical use in promoting efficiency!

Breakdowns were ten a penny and had to be faced with resource and courage. There was the time when Mitchell was urgently whisked into the studio because the picture had broken down but the sound was still operating; he kept things going by telling a few jokes; what a pleasure it was to be able to relax without the cameras on him and what a shock when someone burst into the studio shouting "What the hell do you think you are doing . . . the picture's all right . . . it's the sound that's gone!" This was nothing to the debonair unruffled Leslie Mitchell, but there was one occasion later on when his equilibrium

was badly shaken. He was being televised during a fire demonstration at the top of a 90 ft ladder; the extending ladder caught the announcer's trousers and methodically tore them into strips. The cameraman intently engaged in obtaining a good close-up was far too immersed in his work to notice that anything was amiss. Leslie Mitchell thus goes on record as being the first man to be televised without his trousers; their loss was quite a problem, too, since his dress allowance with the job was nothing! The two girls were allowed £25 a year, and they had to content themselves with buying the top half of their regalia which they wore with their own skirts.

A great performer in the Radiolympia days was Television Tilly. She worked silently and efficiently behind the scenes in preparation for the opening. Those around her may have got flustered and irritable, but Tilly smiled sweetly on through it all. She worked anything from twelve to sixteen hours a day without a murmur; announcers and electricians may have put her unceremoniously out of their way, but she remained unruffled.

Television Tilly, alas, was only a dummy bought to do the endless waiting in front of the cameras, and so relieve the artistes and announcers of this wearisome task. An ordinary shop window model, but not of wax—or else poor Tilly would have melted unceremoniously away under the heat of the cameras—she was used when focusing the camera into its correct position and was dressed up in various coloured frocks to see which colours showed up best.

The ten days of the show were hectic, memorable and dramatic, the dramatic side being supplied by attempted sabotage. An attempt was made to wreck the whole thing and was obviously the work of someone with an expert knowledge of the mechanism concerned. The individual was believed to be acting for rival trade interests. A wad of tinfoil had been inserted into a vital plug point which connected the eight viewing booths with amplification equipment. Only an electrician or radio engineer would have realized the chaos which this could have caused. The apparatus was temporarily put out of action by a short circuit, but this was put right to enable the next day's show to be given. The attempt at wrecking the transmissions was considered to be made by the same hands which had produced a number of previous curious and hitherto unsuspected incidents, which included the mysterious

burning out of a transmitter, and the finding of a dead mouse wedged in the equipment.

William Shakespeare, to whom most other honours have already been paid, achieved a new distinction when his was the first portrait to pass over the air at Radiolympia, and when Sir Thomas Beecham visited the Exhibition he said he believed that television could do much to improve the musical taste of the nation. Radiolympia, too, proved very efficiently the part which television could play, and indeed, has played, in televising up-to-the-minute events. Little more than four hours after the *Queen Mary* had docked at Southampton in August, 1936, her picture was flashed on the eight booths at Radiolympia. The film had been flown from Southampton to the Gaumont British laboratory at Shepherd's Bush. After being developed the necessary short section was sent by car to Alexandra Palace, and when all was ready a telephone bell rang in the Baird spotlight studio. Leslie Mitchell, busy announcing, picked up the receiver and was heard quite clearly saying "What . . . the *Queen Mary*." Within a few seconds the great ship was on the screen.

From the sea to the air. . . . A Gaumont British film was shown of Merrill and Harry Richman with their aeroplane at Floyd Bennett Field, New York. While the film was being televised from Alexandra Palace the announcer was able to give the news that the flyers had crossed the Atlantic and had landed safely on this side.

By a similar method, a football match between Arsenal and Everton was shown. Admittedly, this was not an outside broadcast; it was merely a case of showing film of a match, but the fact still remains that the players of Arsenal and Everton at Highbury on Saturday, 29 August 1936 were the first to appear on a public television screen. The twenty-two players therefore, without knowing it, had made football and television history. They were Wilson; Male, Hapgood; Crayston, Roberts, Copping; Hulme, Bowden, Drake, James and Bastin of Arsenal, and Sagar; Jackson, Cook; Britton, Gee, Mercer; Gillick, Cunliffe, Dean, Stevenson and Coutler of Everton . . . what magic names to footballers all over the world. "Dixie" Dean, Alex James, Joe Hulme.

Many films were shown during the run of Radiolympia featuring such screen favourites as Charles Laughton, Elizabeth Bergner, Douglas

Fairbanks Jnr., Elissa Landi and Jack Buchanan, and on the last day of the show, 5 September, the B.B.C. quite accidentally brought off the first outside broadcast. This news was contained in an internal memorandum from Television Executive to Miss Milnes, the librarian. It read:

Please note that the first television outside broadcast took place on Saturday, September 5th, between 12.05 and 12.10 p.m. It consisted of a broadcast of the departure of Leonard Henry from the main entrance of our premises at Alexandra Palace.

John Logie Baird had not lost the opportunity of using Radiolympia to stage yet another of his remarkable television achievements. A *News Chronicle* reporter gave a glowing account of what he had seen while flying 4,000 ft up at 170 miles an hour. He was aboard a Royal Dutch Airliner—the first aeroplane to be equipped with a Baird Televisor, and from which Paul Robeson and Charles Laughton were seen clearly broadcasting through Olympia. Baird revelled in the unusual and in chalking up yet another first in the field of television development; the apparatus aboard the aircraft weighed 420 lbs. Baird had now televised aboard a train, a ship and an aircraft.

Elizabeth Cowell, incidentally, had recovered in time to make her first appearance for Radiolympia on 31 August. She remembers it well; she was announcing Helen MacKay and looked to her right for Miss MacKay's entrance . . . the singer obliged by coming in from the left! She ran into greater difficulties when Peter Dawson, famous baritone, visited Alexandra Palace and agreed to sing before the cameras. Miss Cowell announced him and the singer began. Soon the telephone bell rang—Miss Cowell could be seen answering it and was told that she must get Mr Dawson to sit down because the cameras cut his head off in a standing position. Peter Dawson, thinking she was merely being considerate, replied that it was quite all right, he preferred to stand. Happily, Miss Cowell's winning ways prevailed, and viewers were able to see where the voice was coming from; a headless baritone has little to commend it!

Radiolympia, as far as the trade was concerned, had been a success. Few manufacturers exhibiting television sets had expected to sell many—at first they did not bother to price them, but the public demand compelled them to set their factories to produce television

sets at prices ranging from £90 to £120. The trade was duly alarmed when the B.B.C. announced a closure for six weeks to give them a chance to get their second wind after what had been a tremendous effort, but this closing down was not as drastic as the trade had imagined. It was only the regularity of the service which was suspended, and programmes did go on up until the time of the official opening. In October, Gerald Cock made this announcement:

In November we shall start regular television programmes for two hours daily. There will be variety turns including dancing and skating. Informality and brightness will be the keynotes of the television programmes. The finest artistes will be engaged. Some of our open-air shots will consist of television rambles. At first we will operate from films of news events, but later we will take the television eye to outdoor events such as the Derby, Cowes and theatrical first nights. People should not be discouraged by the technical hitches which occurred in the broadcasts from Alexandra Palace this week. These early broadcasts are bound to be more or less experimental. Every day we are learning something new. We discovered recently that the television eye is more sensitive than a camera. It registers details the camera does not see.

Also in October, before the regular service came into operation, a great event happened; it was a happy event—the birth of Picture Page, a magazine programme which lasted until the outbreak of war, after 262 performances, survived the upheaval, and ran altogether for a total of over 600 shows. Pre-war it was Madden's baby; afterwards it was taken over by Joan Gilbert. Picture Page made famous the name of Joan Miller, an actress who has—and still is—showing exceptional talents in her profession. Joan Miller having gone as far as she could in the acting world in Canada came to England to put her name in lights. She met Cecil Madden, and Madden thought he could use her in the new medium of television. He asked her to write something and perform it next day; she did—it was not what Madden wanted, he was looking for an act—not a recitation. Joan Miller and her mother stayed up all that night and wrote a sketch involving a telephone operator; this filled the bill and gave Madden the idea of using Joan Miller as the compere link for stringing together the items of Picture Page by sitting at a telephone switch-board and plugging the viewers in to the celebrities. She would say, "You want to see Gracie Fields.

You're through", and up would come Gracie on a small screen. So popular did this become that the expression "You're through" was used in society just as phrases from "Itma" were used universally during the war; so much so that the Director of Television found himself being poked in the ribs at parties—as the much amused guests said "You're through". In due course this had rather a wearing effect on the director and he rang Madden insisting that the telephone operator method should be scrapped at once; it was, and a reception desk was used in its place. Joan Miller stayed with Picture Page until the war and then left it to concentrate on her career as a serious actress. Her stories of Picture Page would fill a book. There was the story of the unhappy little elephant, for instance, who began at rehearsals by having a drink from a pail which contained red paint; most of the time before the show was spent trying to get it off the miserable creature's trunk.

Picture Page began its run on 8 October. Joan Miller introduced Squadron Leader Swain, holder of the altitude record, John Snuggs, a troubadour, the colourful Prince ("I gotta Horse") Monolulu, Mrs Drummond, the suffragette, Dinah Sheridan, then a poster model, and last, but by no means least, Prestwick Pertana, a Siamese prize winning cat. Madden knew at once that success was assured for Picture Page. This first edition was produced by George More O'Ferrall. Dinah Sheridan, who starred in the post-war film comedy success *Genevieve* with Kay Kendall, became Mrs John Davis, wife of the managing director of the Rank film empire.

The range of television at this time was considered to be in the neighbourhood of twenty-five miles. There was indeed much to learn and much to do. Soon, November came and with it was heralded a new age in civilization—the age of television as an integral part of the British way of life. The first regular television service in the world began in this country. America was still way behind. The British Broadcasting Corporation, much maligned, and operating with very limited funds (a most important factor in the B.B.C.s early activities in television) had beaten the world to it.

## CHAPTER III: THE WORLD'S FIRST SERVICE

*The First regular Television service in the World begins on 2 November 1936 . . . Baird loses the battle in February, 1937 . . . tremendous feat of televising the Coronation . . . steady progress and then a World War.*

POSTMASTER-GENERALs have licked stamps, climbed aerial masts and telegraph poles, handled golden telephone sets, and drawn the old age pension for the sake of inaugurating new post office facilities, but Major G. C. Tryon was the first of his line to undergo the indignity of having his face powdered and his eyebrows painted as was necessary for the official opening of the B.B.C. Television service on 2 November 1936. He was made presentable to the viewing public by Mary Allan, a talented make-up expert. At that time there were only about 300 television sets in private hands.

2 November 1936, then, is the official birthday of B.B.C. Television, but to the heroes of Radiolympia, 26 August is *the* day; they regarded the official opening as something of an anti-climax; after all, they had put out two programmes a day for ten days, but as the service was not officially born, one can only set their efforts down in the records as pre-natal, as it were. Whatever the pros and cons of that issue—and it is purely a domestic affair—Radiolympia had been a valuable piece of reconnaissance; much was learned from it. Lighting, for instance, was found to call for an entirely new technique; it was a journey into unexplored territory. D. R. Campbell, the man who with T. H. Bridgewater had installed the Baird equipment in 1932, took lighting under his wing. "Cam" became the father of television lighting. Another technical difficulty was the fact that it took seven seconds to switch between cameras; this called for swift and accurate anticipation on the part of producer and camera-man.

To tackle the endless problems, the B.B.C. had gathered together a team, young in heart, strong in spirit and determination, and most of all, wildly enthusiastic. Gerald Cock, an extremely able director, Cecil Madden as programme organizer, Leonard Schuster as administrator, Douglas Birkinshaw the engineer in charge with his lieutenants, Campbell on lighting, Bridgewater, senior maintenance engineer, and the two senior engineers transmitters, H. W. Baker and H. F. Bowden. Peter Bax was the design chief; there were producers George More O'Ferrall, Dallas Bower and Stephen Thomas with Donald Munro in charge of presentation, announcers Jasmine Bligh, Elizabeth Cowell and Leslie Mitchell.

To this little band of pioneers, television was an exciting new world; now it has spanned a quarter of a century having survived the ravages of a world war to play a leading part in life—a life which moves fast and scientifically.

At 3.30 p.m. on Monday, 2 November 1936 the world's first regular service came into being. There were speeches by the chairman of the British Broadcasting Corporation—Mr R. C. Norman, the Postmaster-General, and Lord Selsdon, chairman of the Television Advisory Committee, a great man whose services in the birth and development of television must be given their rightful place in history. Sir Harry Greer, chairman of Baird's, and Mr Alfred Clark, chairman of Marconi-E.M.I. were each televised by their own systems. Mr Norman said—"We believe that these proceedings will be remembered in the future as an historic occasion, not less momentous and not less rich in promise than the day, almost fourteen years ago, when the British Broadcasting Company, as it was then, transmitted its first programme from Marconi House."

The speeches were followed by light entertainment provided by Adele Dixon, and Buck and Bubbles, two coloured American comedians and dancers. In the evening Cecil Madden presented his second edition of Picture Page. It was here that Jasmine Bligh, now fully recovered, made her first television appearance. The programme was indeed a mixed bag; it included Jim Mollison, having just completed an Atlantic flight; Kay Stammers from the world of tennis; "Bossy" Phelps, the King's Bargemaster with John Snagge, whose affinities with the River Thames have made him world famous, and

two topical notes—the Lord Mayor's coachman, and boys with Guy Fawkes. Madden ran Picture Page by means of a scouting system. People were paid 3 guineas for any suggestion which was accepted, provided they delivered the personality concerned safely to Alexandra Palace. This, of course, produced keen rivalry amongst the scouts since it was possible for one scout to provide the material for a whole programme; it was up to the other scouts to see that he did not. Picture Page was produced twice a week, both editions being on the same day.

This was done because once having the set in being for the programme in the afternoon, it was easier to leave it as it was for a second edition in the evening, even although the programme was entirely different in composition. The University rugby captains, Prince A. Obolensky of Oxford and C. D. Laborde of Cambridge, were interviewed a few days before the University match in 1936; Gordon Richards followed a few days later having had 1,000 mounts; Sabu, the elephant boy, appeared on Christmas Day, a programme in which Joan Miller presented her own act "Grand Hotel, Good Morning". So varied did the contents of Picture Page continue to be that after its thirtieth performance there had been 162 programme items, in which Leslie Mitchell had interviewed 168 men, 90 women, 12 boys, 12 choir boys, 1 elephant boy, 6 girls, 1 fairy, 3 accompanists, 1 Siamese cat, 1 Alsatian dog, 1 string of onions, 1 monkey, 1 model of Bond Street, 1 tray of muffins, 1 box of herrings, 1 Guy Fawkes, Television Tilly and a silkworm! How right it was to say that Leslie Mitchell was versatile!

An important aspect of these early programmes was that everyone was quite ready to try and run before they could walk. Madden, the show-man, knew instinctively that it was no good putting on moderate programmes with the assurance that they would get better in time. He felt there was nothing to lose by being ambitious, and accomplished quite a remarkable feat by staging the first studio ballet, with the Mercury Ballet Company, the first studio play *Marigold*, and the first studio opera *Mr Pickwick*, all within ten days of the opening of the service—a mighty performance.

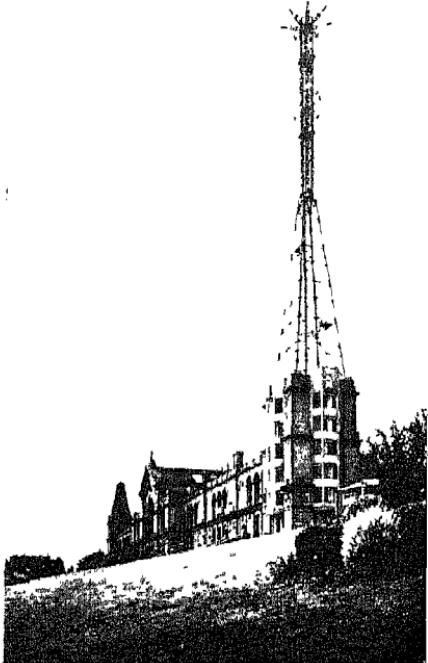
Madden, incidentally, known for years as "Legs" Madden, because of his strong belief in the success of "Leg" shows on television, once



#### LIMITS CHANGE

The top group, taken in 1931, is the PARAMOUNT ASTORIA GIRLS, who appeared in the very early transmissions of 1932. Below—the TELEVISION TOPPERS in 1955. The brunettes ANN LATBOI, MARY CLARKI, MARCIA BARD, FYN DALTY, JO DOBSON and JACKIE JOYNER. The blondes ORRENA LEDER, JACQUELINE PAUL, ANGELA BRADSHAW, VALERIE BROOK, DAPHNE FORD and GILLIAN BLAIR.





London's famous landmark—Alexandra Palace, where the B B C began the first Television Service in the world in 1936. Twenty programmes were put out in August specially for Radiolympia. On 2 November, the B B C Television Service was officially opened by the Postmaster-General. Part of Alexandra Palace is still used for B B C Television "News."

Testimony to the great advance since 1936. The B B C's Television Centre at the White City—a £10,000,000 building whose function will be to produce about 1,500 hours per annum of electronic programme material for television. The first studio was brought into use on 19 June 1960.



produced a novel idea for April Fool's Day; he engaged almost every male act he could lay his hands on; no woman graced his show on that particular day! In all the flurry of excitement in November 1936, one unhappy aspect must not be overlooked—the fire which destroyed the Crystal Palace and with it a considerable amount of the Baird Company's television equipment. Did this fire have considerable bearing on the future of the company in relation to its activities with the B.B.C.? Clearly, it was a great blow to Baird; this must not be underestimated, but what is a most salient point in this two-pronged battle, is the fact that at the time of the fire, the B.B.C. had already sounded the Marconi-E.M.I. Company as to the possibilities of their televising the Coronation on 12 May 1937; this undertaking was not practicable for the Baird Company since their cameras were screwed to the floor and not mobile; so already, only a week or so after the opening, it was seen that the E.M.I. Company was one jump ahead of Baird. It was certain, therefore, that Baird would still have lost the race, even without the tremendous setback he suffered in the flames and smoke of a cruel fire on 30 November 1936.

Jasmine Bligh and Elizabeth Cowell widened their sphere of activities as time went on. Jasmine Bligh went in for stunts and became known as the "Pearl White" of Television; she, like Leslie Mitchell, climbed fire escapes, took part in the old crocks race, went track riding with the Metropolitan Police, flew in an auto-gyro, and played tennis at Wimbledon in a straw boater and long skirt with an ancient racquet. She was insured for £1,000 against injury; occasionally minor mishaps occurred, such as the day she was bitten on the arm by a chimpanzee and continued announcing with a stiff upper lip. Elizabeth Cowell, too, suffered from an occasional bite; a cockatoo once took a piece out of her leg and exclaimed savagely—"Get your cash, you red-headed old cat". The cockatoo should have known that had Miss Cowell possessed red hair she would not have been on television! Elizabeth Cowell subsequently took to producing ballet. She took charge of the first original television ballet—*The Three Bears*—in February 1938. The smallest of the three bears was Margaret Dale, now the B.B.C. ballet producer. Later that year when Donald Munro went abroad, he left her to produce *The Sleeping Princess* with Margot Fonteyn, no small undertaking. She will be remembered, too, for the television garden

programme with Mr C. H. Middleton which ran for so long and with so much success.

On 8 January 1937, the B.B.C. issued a television supplement to the London edition of the *Radio Times*. The programmes lasted from three o'clock until four, and from nine until ten, and basically the format was the same then, on a much smaller scale, as it is now; many of the programmes in a simple way were forerunners of much of the established pattern of today. Madden had instituted a rota system for his producers so that they all became accomplished in the various facets of presentation. One item billed in the *Radio Times* for Monday, 11 January was a fifteen minute programme featuring Peggy Cochrane and Tommy Handley. Peggy Cochrane was given a twenty-one line build up, Tommy Handley was given not a word. Tommy, the man whose signed photograph hangs proudly in my study to this day, the man who all but cost me my life during the war.

I was flying a Whitley aircraft one night on the way to an English town with whom we were to co-operate in a searchlight and ack-ack exercise. The Germans, however, had chosen that very night to test the ack-ack of this particular place in earnest. An S.O.S. had been sent to us to return to base at once, but it happened to be a Thursday night, and whether on the ground or in the air, I would not miss ITMA. The vital message was thus never received. We flew into a barrage of flack and what my crew said can never, at any time, appear in print. I was dining with Tommy Handley one night after the war and recounted the story in full, even including the words of my rear-gunner which, to us, became immortal. I have told this story in print once before. It happened to be read by Marshal of the Royal Air Force, the Lord Tedder, G.C.B.; he did not think of it in terms of good publicity value for ITMA; it was bad publicity for the discipline of a Royal Air Force pilot!

The programme contents in 1937 included Home Affairs, in which Rt. Hon. Herbert Morrison was an early speaker; Gaumont British and Movietone news; C. H. Middleton in his garden was a great favourite and then there was Eric Wild and his teatimers, with Eric Robinson on guitar. This combination specialized in the soft rhythmic style of playing; it was an off-shoot of the Television orchestra—Mario Lorenzi played his harp; Bob and Alf Pearson were billed as "Songs and

Comedy"; Ronald Frankau, the other half of Mr Murgatroyd and Mr Winterbottom with Tommy Handley, was seen in Saturday night cabaret; Frances Day topped a floor show; instruction was given in ballroom dancing; there was International boxing between Ireland and England from the Concert Hall of Alexandra Palace; Marcel Boulestin, a famed chef, gave cooking lessons, and John Carr's Jacquard puppets, were all forerunners of popular entertainment of today. Muffin and Sooty, for instance, followed in due course.

February, 1937, is another landmark. Contained in a list of television's historical dates, compiled by the B.B.C., there appears six words against 6 February, "Marconi-E.M.I. system adopted. Baird system dropped." Six words which shattered a Baird Empire, stunned Baird and his associates, and was the outcome of a prolonged battle, now irretrievably lost. This decision was not taken by the B.B.C. It was the responsibility of the Television Advisory Committee. It was, I am sure, after considerable research, the right one. Campbell Swinton was correct in his forecast of 1908. The future of television did lie in the electronics system. Baird's mechanical devices were not a match for it. John Logie Baird thus drops out of this B.B.C. story, but not without a glowing tribute being paid to him, to his grim determination, and to the part he played in history. Television would certainly have come without him, but not as soon as it did; he drew the attention of the world to its possibilities and his unrelenting endeavours merely stimulated his rivals to produce greater efforts themselves. Could he have saved the day by turning his attentions to electronics in the end? The answer lies probably in the question of financial outlay in a race in which he was already some considerable distance behind. Bill, William Taynton, and the *Berengaria* have immortalized the name of John Logie Baird. He continued with his work after this mortal blow even through the London blitz; he was working still when he died at Bexhill in 1945. Baird has gone; television remains a world institution.

Television was now high finance, although a single individual, a Mr Harold Hanscombe, 37 year old manager of "The Lass of Richmond Hill" hotel, claimed in April 1937 that he had discovered television in natural colours. His experiments in colour had been carried out secretly at night in a Hampstead laboratory. It's anybody's guess what happened to them!

May, 1937, was television's most memorable month; it was the month that a new baby tried to run before it could walk, and made a brilliant success of the job. Looking back it seems quite inconceivable that the B.B.C. decided to tackle an outside broadcast of such magnitude, for its first attempt, as the Coronation of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth. Permission was not forthcoming so as to allow cameras to be placed in Westminster Abbey, and so three cameras were installed at Hyde Park Corner. This was the first appearance in public of the television control van, now an everyday spectacle at leading outdoor events. Tests were carried out in great secrecy on 3 May, at Apsley Gate, and continued for two hours on a closed circuit. Then it was decided to televise Hyde Park to whoever was looking in. Officials rang up their wives asking them to tune in and report back on what they were seeing—"Can you see a man lighting a cigar?—How badly that girl sits in the saddle". The whole thing worked, and opened up immense possibilities; imagine how much television would lose without the outside broadcast. Confidence was the keynote when Coronation Day came as the pioneers set out on the great adventure. There was nearly a major disaster. When a breakdown occurred the technicians switched over to the second channel which had been provided in case the first one failed—the second channel was dead as well. Disaster threatened, but there was a man to fill the breach—the man was Eric White, the E.M.I. genius, who quickly calculated which pieces of equipment were common to both channels, and as providence would have it, put his finger on the trouble first time—but what a moment! Three camera-men, John Bliss, Harry Tonge and Roland Price were thus able to make history. (Twenty-two cameras were used for the Coronation of 1953.) Freddie Grisewood was the commentator for this first outside broadcast, with Bridgewater the C-in-C of the whole operation. Manufacturers and retailers estimated that about 50,000 people saw the transmission which was received as far away as sixty-three miles. A month later a record in television range was established by the reception of a complete programme at Coventry, eighty-three miles from the transmitter.

The engineering division worked unceasingly during these pre-war years in the cause of British television, and without the solid foundation which it created the venture might have crumpled long ago. One of

the most memorable instances of their devotion to duty, come what may, was the night when a howling gale completely wrecked the aerial mast at Alexandra Palace, and, in blinding rain, Birkinshaw climbed the 300 ft to the top to assess the precise extent of the damage; it was considerable. Campbell, the lighting expert, was asked to bring some lights outside the building and focus them on the aerial mast, and Bowden and his team of helpers went up to tackle a herculean task not the least of which was not getting blown off in the teeth of the gale. It took many hours to sort out the tangled mass of wires. Bowden, only able to find a white coat to protect him, has said that by the time the work of tying down the dipole arms was completed, he was soaked through to the skin, and not very long afterwards had his left shoulder put in plaster as an unwelcome reward for his trouble.

The Coronation, of course, overshadowed all other events in May, but it is still worth recording that the first Sporting Magazine programme was televised on 1 May—a monthly sports review; the first edition featured Jack Peterson, who discussed a film of the Tommy Farr—Max Baer fight; this might easily be described as the forerunner of *Sportsview*. In July, a mobile television unit was televising matches on the centre court at Wimbledon. Play was transmitted on ultra-short waves over the twelve miles from Wimbledon to Alexandra Palace, and there sent out as an ordinary television broadcast. This was the first time that any outside event was televised without a cable link to Alexandra Palace—the Coronation had involved eight miles of cable from Hyde Park Corner to Alexandra Palace. All London was now a subject for the television camera, and the public was urged by the newspapers to visit the big stores at three o'clock any afternoon to try and see a demonstration. They would be surprised how clear the picture was, but in view of the size of the screen, 8 in x 10 in—only about twenty people could get a good view at one showing.

There was an amusing little aside to television events when one national newspaper ran a story under the headline of "Bare legs banned by the B.B.C." Happily, for Madden, the bare-legs ban applied only to the B.B.C. television restaurant. A party of Canadian girls, members of a team of sixty-eight who had come to this country to take part in

the Festival of Beauty at Wembley, entered the television restaurant in their costumes. They were spotted by the manageress and asked to leave. Their leader, and heaven knows rightly so, explained that she thought that legs were things of beauty and were not offensive in any way. This point cut no ice at all, it was a new rule, they were told, made virtually on the spot, when a number of dancers taking part in a television showing of *Hassan* came down to the restaurant in what was described simply as—"scanty attire".

On 25 July 1937, television went on holiday. There was a close-down for twenty-one days to give the staff a breather and to clear the decks for the first complete winter of television. During this period only a small Maltese cross was on view twice daily for the benefit of manufacturers. Thus Baird's Maltese cross of 1925 had now become a symbol.

All the time, however, the press were demanding something better, and Jonah Barrington, writing in the *Daily Express*, said:

The B.B.C. are holding a thriving lusty baby called television—and it's too heavy for them. That, tersely, is the position today. Consider the lesson of Radiolympia. There we saw manufacturers making magnificent gestures by dropping the price of television receivers and increasing their efficiency. But do the B.B.C. reciprocate by increasing their programme service? There is no definite news. They may do this or they may do that. Gentlemen—we need action. And quickly. Because the present programme allowance—two hours daily and a demonstration film in the morning—is woefully, ridiculously inadequate. The solution is obvious—televise the broadcast programmes. Let the two services join hands.

The solution, in fact, was not quite as simple as Mr Barrington would have had us believe. The B.B.C. would be the last to plead poverty, but the financial aspect of the whole organization was one of some magnitude. The estimated cost of the first year's running was £180,000 with the Treasury and the B.B.C. contributing equal amounts. The Government then changed its plan and granted the B.B.C. an extra £236,000 out of Radio Licence revenue on the understanding that the B.B.C. would foot the whole of the television bill. As the cost of the service up to 30 September 1937 came to £448,000, the B.B.C. got the worst of this deal.

The first anniversary of B.B.C. television came and went quietly.

The official view was taken that so much had still to be done that it was hardly the time to celebrate. The artistes, however, had every reason to throw a party, if only for one blessed event; it was no longer necessary for them to undergo the ordeal of being heavily made up in vivid colours. A year of steady research in the laboratories of E.M.I. had vastly improved conditions, and when Anna Neagle faced the television cameras for the first time at Alexandra Palace she was able to use a lighter make-up than the one she normally employed for films. Bernard Shaw was probably the first man to be televised without any make-up at all; he had one tremendous advantage—beards always televise well.

There was one anniversary very shortly afterwards which was duly celebrated, and rightly so—the 100 edition of Picture Page. Gerald Cock, then lying ill, sent a telegram to Cecil Madden on 1 December 1937 as follows: "Good Luck to you and all Picture Pages. . . . Keep us a bit of cake!" A birthday cake gaily decorated with 100 candles was cut jointly by Madden and Joan Miller. Madden had gathered together an impressive array of personalities for the occasion. Emile Littler and Binnie Hale, Sabu, Jack Doyle, Jean Batten, and some of the originals of the first edition including Prince Monolulu and Mrs Flora Drummond. Picture Page's great virtue had been its immense variety of subjects which had ranged from the world champion goat on a visit from the Dairy Show to the Waiata Maori Choir on a tour of England. Names like J. B. Priestley, Axel Munthe, Malcolm Sargent, Adrian Boult, Diana Wynyard were all Picture Pagers; not a bad run—and many more to come—for a show born in the hectic days before the official opening of the television service.

During 1937, television's team had grown in numerical strength especially on the producing side. Mary Adams (women's), Jan Bussell (drama), Eric Crozier (miscellaneous), Reggie Smith (revue), Moultrie Kelsall (drama), Harry Pringle (variety), Royston Morley (assistant) and Philip Dorte (outside broadcasts) arrived on the scene. This little team did an immense amount in the service of the B.B.C. and television. By the beginning of 1938, television was coming out of its cradle, a fine, strong and healthy infant—despite all the criticism, and was beginning to shape its future, a future with immense possibilities which have long

since matured into reality. Television could, and has, reconstructed the whole framework of life itself.

The words of Aldous Huxley in his satirical novel of the future—*Brave New World*, published in 1933, were beginning to come true. Huxley wrote:

At the foot of every bed . . . was a television box. Television was left on, a running tap, from morning till night. Hither and thither across their square of illumined glass, the little figures noiselessly darted, like fish in an aquarium, the silent but agitated inhabitants of another world.

S. P. B. Mais, in later years, was not quite as lyrical. Asked to give his views on television he replied bluntly "It takes place at the Alexandra Palace, where you eat the most dismal meals in the draughtiest rooms in the ugliest building in the world."

But then views on television have always been poles apart. Sir Harry Lauder steadfastly refused to be televised in March, 1938, at the same time that Gillie Potter would not broadcast, but would televise. Harry Lauder held the opinion that in spite of the remarkable progress of television, it had not reached a stage where the artistes could find it an adequate medium. Gillie Potter televised twice, but refused to broadcast unless he could do so in a studio by himself, his only audience being the invisible listeners. He said "How can I possibly speak to people as intimate fireside circles if I am also to talk to and be distracted by a music-hall audience who want something entirely different."

In April, 1938, the television cameras turned their attention to the Boat Race, and what trials and tribulations this brought to all concerned. Plans nearly collapsed before they began because the Brentford and Chiswick Town Council wanted to charge the B.B.C. 25 guineas for the use of land near the river. The B.B.C. wrote politely pointing out that this was a national event and all owed a debt of duty to the public in allowing it to be shown; they offered to pay £5 5s. By thirteen votes to eleven the council accepted the offer. Having solved this problem the next nigger in the woodpile was an over-zealous workman in a Muswell Hill highway; he severed a cable with his pick which completely cut off Alexandra Palace from telephonic communication with the outside world. This meant that there could be no

sound commentary to accompany the pictures of the race, and no means of passing instructions between the river and Alexandra Palace. Philip Dorte, then director of Television Films, who was in charge of the mobile television near the finishing post, resourcefully scribbled messages on paper, held them in front of the camera, and so transmitted them to Alexandra Palace up to the time of the race. Ironically enough, although the sound line had failed, the pictures transmitted over the air were exceptionally clear, and were received without a trace of interference. Emergency squads of post office engineers worked at high pressure to restore communication. When a short time before the start they had failed to connect Alexandra Palace with the riverside, Howard Marshall, who was to have given the television commentary from Mortlake, left for Alexandra Palace by car to give his commentary from there while watching the screen. In the meantime televiwers were entertained by an endless repetition of the "Eton Boating Song". Sound communications were restored in time to enable interviews to be conducted after the crews had brought in their boats.

By this time Cecil Madden had seen his greatest ambition bear fruit; he established the Sunday night play, beginning on 28 March with Pirandello's *Henry IV*. The irrepressible Madden had also produced something else out of the hat; he had discovered a girl, Dolores Ray, who needed no make-up whatsoever for television. Mary Allan began making her up and stopped, saying "You don't need any make-up, you have the ideal skin for lighting purposes, and your features, so far as photography is concerned, are classic." Venus, it seemed, had at last emerged!

The lake in Alexandra Park was the next venue for television cameras; it became the scene of a reconstruction of the famous Naval attack on Zeebrugge, twenty years, almost to the hour, after the historic attack on 23 April 1918 in which 225 lives were lost. The lake was converted into a scale model of the Mole and Canal at Zeebrugge. Staged in the darkness the scene was lit by batteries of searchlights and showed gun flashes and burning wrecks. The ships were lifelike models worked by underwater mechanism. The object of the St George's Day landing at Zeebrugge was to create a diversion in order that three old warships laden with concrete might be navigated right up the channel and sunk in such a manner as to block the exit for the

many German submarines which had made Zeebrugge their base. The plan succeeded and the port was efficiently blocked for the rest of the war.

In May, 1938, viewers enjoyed the amusing spectacle of Thomas Woodrooffe eating his hat—a straw boater served to him by Leslie Mitchell. Woodrooffe, commentating on the F.A. Cup Final between Preston North End and Huddersfield Town had remarked, "If Preston score now, I'll eat my hat"—score they did; and how I remember the dramatic moment when watching my first cup final, as Mutch, the Preston inside forward moved up to take a penalty kick. He aimed for the roof of the net—the ball struck the under-side of the bar and bounced over the line for a goal—only seconds remained. The cup went to Preston, and a commentator suffered certain discomforts later in the evening! The Derby was televised in June, and the Oval Test Match against Australia in August.

Television, like the world, was anxious in those summer days of 1938. A house-painter named Hitler had bigger ideas than house painting, he just wanted the world. The months of July, August and half of September were days of tension, although one could hardly associate the national situation with the first collapse of an artiste whilst being televised. Joan Collier, after singing the opening bars of a song, fell backwards over a box on which she had been sitting; the programme was instantly faded out. This was the first incident of its kind. On 16 September, B.B.C. television obtained an historical picture—the return of the Prime Minister, Rt. Hon. Neville Chamberlain, from Munich, where he had seen Hitler, and enthusiastically told the world—"Peace in our time." This old English gentleman had been foisted, a Hitler promise was shown in its true light a year later.

The B.B.C. subsequently chose fifty rats for a television programme. With a gale howling through the little back-yard behind Alexandra Palace fifty rats became television stars. They were required for an opera—*The Piper*, which was to be televised. Desmond Davis, the producer, feared the result of introducing them on to the set during the actual show. So they filmed the rats separately and the film was superimposed on the television broadcast. First they were tipped into a long trough and tempted with cheese to scamper down it, some did, some didn't. They were then required to plunge to death into a river—a

little muddy water and slabs of turf arranged in an old bath around which cheese was plentifully sprinkled. The rats wisely paused on the brink, tested the temperature of the water with their paws and then sat back and combed their whiskers. Finally they had to drop down a grey background on to a soft sacking so that they seemed to be plunging to their doom over a precipice. Rat men were busy collecting odd rats from all corners and popping them back in the boxes. What people will do for television!

On 12 November 1938 heavy gunfire was heard in the Muswell Hill area; many people telephoned the police asking if we were being attacked; perhaps Adolf had changed his mind as he had a habit of doing. There was nothing to worry about. It was merely a couple of howitzers being fired by men of the 53rd (London) Medium Brigade R.A. T.A. and the 7th Middlesex Regiment, T.A., all in the cause of a television play—*White Chateau*. A few windows went west that evening. Four days later the first play was televised direct from a theatre—J. B. Priestley's *When We Are Married* from St Martin's. It was seeing this television performance which convinced producers of the value of having a studio audience. They realized that the spontaneous laughter of the audience helped to provide atmosphere. The studios at Alexandra Palace were not large enough at the time, but it was a point for the future.

B.B.C. Television had now celebrated its second birthday and *The Times* wrote: "The B.B.C. is to be congratulated on its far seeing television policy which has given this country the leading position." Other countries were a long way behind us although the Germans struck a novel note when the Berlin police televised an overcoat belonging to a man wanted for murder. It made crime history, and television history, too. In December, Picture Page had put the 200 up. L. Marsland Gander, the television critic, wrote—"The 200th edition of Picture Page on December 15 was as friendly a party as I ever wish to attend and as inconsequential a programme as ever whitened the hair of a harassed producer. Viscount Castlerosse, arriving in the studio after the broadcast had started, with his editor, John Gordon, yielded to whispered exhortations and stepped in front of the camera. Cecilia Colledge, another performer, did not arrive until the programme was half-way through. Yet I would not change it for the most skilfully cut

and polished magazine that ever came out of a film studio. Picture Page lasts only an hour a week, and on an average there are twenty items. But behind it there is a tireless seven days' hunt. Madden and his five scouts scour the newspapers and the shipping lists. Day and night the editor of Picture Page is a slave of the telephone ring; he cannot read a newspaper or magazine, or visit a theatre or music-hall with detached enjoyment. Insatiable Picture Page must be served, so that it may go on celebrating with bigger and better birthday cakes as the years go by!"

Cecil Madden and Joan Miller were the oldest inhabitants. They had not missed a single edition. Joan Miller, with an inherent love of the world of entertainment, adhered strictly to its cardinal principle—the show must go on. A bitter blow was the death of her mother two days before Picture Page was due on the air; many is the time she turned up at Alexandra Palace with a temperature high enough to put lesser hearts in bed for a fortnight; in the summer of 1937 she arranged an operation to coincide with the period when Picture Page was taking a month's holiday, and was back with the show on its resumption although still attending hospital for dressings. Courage is always an ingredient used liberally in the make-up of a great artiste. Behind a mere announcement that a performer has not missed one edition of a programme there lies always a fund of human interest stories. Joan Miller is that sort of artiste; among many accomplishments she achieved one unique distinction; she was the first human being ever seen by television from Europe in America, and at the time it was described as being as historic as Marconi's first faint radio signal from Cornwall to Newfoundland on 12 December 1901. One night early in November, 1938, radio engineers were sitting before an ordinary British television set in Riverside receiving station, New York, testing a new serial of advanced design, and got a picture of Joan Miller from Alexandra Palace. They were amazed, to quote them, "To see a woman's face swim rather indistinctly on to the screen on the London wave-length." It was described as a freak of transmission and reception. It was still history; television had spanned 3,000 miles.

Another occasion which might almost be described as unique was the time when Joan Miller was conducting an interview which had to be faded out because all parties concerned were convulsed with laughter

and could do nothing about it. A gentleman named George Brennan, a steel-worker, was being questioned by Joan Miller in "In Town Tonight". Joan said, "I believe you are a weel-stirker—this transposition of steel-worker set George tittering and finally roaring with helpless laughter. Joan joined him and soon the two were helpless, so a male announcer appeared on the scene and offered to help, but he started laughing, they all laughed, and the scene was faded out, but the story has a tail-piece. The listeners did not know that George Brennan was noted as the laughing steel-worker, the man with a laugh which was infectious—several other gags had been written into the script to get Brennan going, but the script-writer had hit the jack-pot first time—weel-stirker did the trick, the man with the infectious laughter had proved himself; he was no fake.

Another television item towards the end of 1938 was yet a further pointer to the future. Underwater scenes were televised for the first time in a programme entitled "How divers are trained", from the Sicbe Gorman diving tank in Westminster Bridge Road. Now the dazzling beauty of the bed of the Indian Ocean has been brought to our firesides by Hans and Lotte Hass.

Television saw the New Year in on 31 December 1938 at Grosvenor House, that fateful year of 1939, a year when the world was plunged into a major war, when the arteries of normal life were severed, and when television was stopped with one fell swoop. In spite of the adverse effect of the Munich crisis, 7,000 receivers were sold between mid-September and December, compared with a little over 4,000 sets sold in the two years between September 1936 and September 1938.

The year began with a welcome New Year's gift for the growing body of viewers. Sunday matinées were introduced for the first time, and since plays had proved by far and away the most popular form of television entertainment, Gerald Cock announced that plays would be shown extensively—even horror plays, beginning with *The Tell-tale Heart*; ample warning would be given so as to keep children and sensitive people away from the screen.

A campaign to expand television was launched by the B.B.C. and Radio Manufacturers Association, because the sale of sets during the period since the regular service began had been much slower than

originally anticipated. Thousands of posters were distributed with a general slogan of "Television is here. . . . You can't shut your eyes to it." The whole of February was devoted to the campaign, but one single television programme had a greater impact than any poster, it was the successful televising of the Boon-Danahar fight. In February, 1939, Children's hour was introduced on television.

In March, Chaplin Cavalcade was presented to mark the fiftieth birthday of the beloved Charlie Chaplin, consisting of a selection of his early films including *The Champion* and *The Bank*. It was on Chaplin's second appearance for the Keystone Company in May, 1914, in *Mabel's Strange Predicament* that he first appeared in the garb which made him world famous. These early films also showed the pioneer efforts of Marie Dressler and Norma Talmadge.

The first full-length television of a West End play was given on 27 March—it was Binnie Hale starring in *Magyar Melody* from His Majesty's. In May, the King and Queen paid a surprise visit to the Victoria Palace to see the 852nd performance of *Me and My Girl*, the show with the Lambeth Walk. Only two hours before the curtain rose the theatre was told of the visit, but as permission would have to have been sought beforehand, it was not possible to show their Majesties in the royal box. The Queen, however, noticed the cameras soon after arriving and pointed them out to the King. Meanwhile Princess Elizabeth and Princess Margaret saw the first act on television at Buckingham Palace.

One play produced under most trying circumstances was Bernard Shaw's *Candida*. It coincided with a firework display in the grounds of Alexandra Palace, and although viewers were warned by Jasmine Bligh that some interference was expected, this proved to be a gross understatement, the noise exceeded all expectations! The bombardment started at the most dramatic point in the play where *Candida* (Marie Ney) was left alone with *Eugene* (Peter Osborn). Loud and intermittent explosions had a ludicrous effect on the dialogue. But show business is show business, and the self-possession of the artistes in the face of great difficulty was remarkable.

Golf was televised for the first time in May; a £500 72-hole match between Bobby Locke and Reg Whitcombe, then the British open champion, from Coombe Hill, Surrey. The caddies had to help carry

the cameras and cables around from hole to hole. Times have changed; caddies might quibble a bit these days.

How did one get a test as a television announcer in 1939? Well, Mrs Evelyn Verschoyle did the trick by appearing on television in a bathing costume and demonstrating yawning, stretching and curling up like a cat. The B.B.C. were so impressed with the yawning, stretching and curling that Mrs Verschoyle was invited to undergo a test as an announcer. She was an exponent of the Hindu ascetic cult of yoga, and took part in a programme presented by Sir Paul Dukes, a former chief of the British Secret Service in Russia entitled "The Art of Fatigue". Sir Paul sought to illustrate his belief that stretching and yawning, in animal fashion, increased mental and physical well-being. Mrs V. brought six dresses with her for the test from which the B.B.C. chose one. Aged 35, she had a soothing low-pitched voice, but when in due course we read of the appointment of an announcer for Radio-lympia, 1939, it was Kay Cavendish. Her qualifications were that she had broadcast regularly with the Cavendish Three, had fenced for England, played lacrosse for the South of England, had a golf handicap of six, had played lawn tennis at Wimbledon, and had started her professional career as a classical pianist—she deserved the job!

Elizabeth Cowell, incidentally, nearly came to a watery end on her holidays that summer. She was sailing on the Solent in a 14 ft dinghy when a squall overturned it; wearing oilskins she became entangled in the sails and was finally rescued by a small boat after struggling for seven minutes to free herself.

The year 1939 saw Alice Marble as champion of Wimbledon, and she appeared on television, but in an elegant white evening gown, and with a deep contralto voice with a faintly husky timbre she sang two numbers, "This Can't be Love because I feel so well" and "Get out of Town". The queen of tennis was a queen of song. Who found out, who would you think? Madden—all just part of the service!

Television still had hard centres of opposition in the entertainment world particularly among the boxing boys who said that televising the Henry Armstrong-Ernie Roderick fight had killed the gate at Herringay Arena. All the more interesting to know that George Black released Tommy Trinder from the second half of *Band Waggon* at the London Palladium, shifting his spectacular act to the first half, so

that he could compere "Up with the Curtain", the B.B.C. Saturday night show.

The summer months of 1939 went anxiously by, and when the B.B.C. complained that they were getting reflections from the experimental barrage balloons they were told politely but firmly by the Air Ministry to leave such things to them. War was inevitable—only a miracle could avert it, and the B.B.C. made plans accordingly, to send the television staff to other stations to await developments. The atmosphere in the last week of August was frightful. Radiolympia had come round again, but there was no gaiety this time. In fact, on one occasion, Donald Munro frantically telephoned from Alexandra Palace to Radiolympia asking "For God's sake get Elizabeth Cowell to smile". Walton Anderson, then studio manager at the exhibition, scribbled on a card which he held before the camera "Smile, darling, please", she smiled. Thursday, 31 August, was the last night of pre-war television. It featured the 262nd edition of Picture Page, and the first Joan Miller had missed. Basil Radford and Naunton Wayne were among the guests.

And so to Friday, 1 September—Black Friday. Douglas Birkinshaw, the engineer in charge at Alexandra Palace, received a message at ten o'clock that he must be prepared to close the station at noon; these instructions were confirmed. The closure came at the end of a Mickey Mouse film. Mickey had just said "I tunk ah go home" in the Garbo manner, when the end came. British television had gone to war. The staff poured out down the steps of Alexandra Palace setting out for prearranged destinations. Three years' work in something they had loved from infancy had just gone up in smoke. Would they ever see Alexandra Palace again, was television finished for all time? That was the mood. Soon the main body of people had gone. Alexandra Palace, gaunt and eerie was left to await its fate. Television had closed down for three reasons. First, because it was considered to be a luxury enjoyed only by a small minority. Secondly, because the highly trained staff were invaluable in the service of radar, and thirdly because the radiation could be detected by the enemy.

Radar could hardly be described as the blood brother of television, but it is an established fact that Watson Watt, the inventor of radar, was one of the earliest lookers-in to the Baird experimental programmes



In 1935 the B.B.C. sought women announcers for television with the following qualities, a super personality, charm, tact, a mezzo voice, a good memory, is acceptable to women as to men, must photograph well, must not have red hair, and must not be married. From the deluge of applicants they chose two: ELIZABETH COWELL (left) and JASMINE BLIGH (below). MISS COWELL's home was in Cambridge.

JASMINE BLIGH's family has a high place of honour in world cricket. Her grandfather, the Hon. Ivo Bligh, who later became EARL DARNLEY, led the England cricket team to Australia in 1882-3. It was on this tour that some ladies burnt a stump, sealed its ashes in an urn, and presented it to the English captain and so the now famous Ashes were born.





Just as ELIZABETH COWELL and JASMINE BECH will be identified with pic-wu television announcing, so will SYLVIA PETERS (left) and MARY MALCOLM (below) be closely associated with its post-wu development. This photograph of SYLVIA PETERS was taken in July, 1947. It was SYLVIA PETERS who introduced the BBC's Coronation telly in 1953.

MARY MALCOLM, a blonde, was the result of the BBC's search for a blonde in contrast to SYLVIA PETERS. They found no blonde to match Miss MALCOLM's ability as an announcer and she got the job which she held until her resignation in 1956.



and did, from time to time, have conversations with the Baird organization. The germ of an idea must have been there. Thinking of Baird and the war, it is fascinating that as far back as December, 1926, Capt. O. G. Hutchinson, who was associated with Baird, said:

It is difficult to estimate what may be the importance in war of television. It becomes feasible to follow an enemy's movements when he believes himself to be in darkness. Attacking aeroplanes, approaching under cover of night, will be disclosed to the defending Headquarters. They will be followed by searchlights emitting invisible rays and as these rays will be unseen by them they will continue to approach until without warning they are brought down by the guns of the defence.

Thus television and radar have an affinity, and overnight some of the technical brains of Alexandra Palace were in the blue uniform of the Royal Air Force.

The four smart girls of B.B.C. television went their different ways. Jasmine Bligh went to make a film with Arthur Askey and the "Band Waggon" team. Elizabeth Cowell jumped into uniform at once and earned 1s 4d a day with the W.A.A.F. Joan Miller turned her attention to her serious acting, and never, in fact, came back to Picture Page. Mary Allan, the make-up expert, went over to sound broadcasting. Elizabeth Cowell, incidentally, was later asked for by the B.B.C. and returned to continue with sound broadcasting for the duration on the foreign news side.

Alexandra Palace was closed down with the exception of two transmitters—one vision, one sound, and these were adapted for the highly secret war-time operation of beam bending. Birkinshaw went back a month or so after the closure. A R.A.F. contingent was already installed there, but he found a bed for the night in what was once the catering manager's office. Wandering nostalgically round the building some few minutes after midnight he found in the still of the night, the B.B.C. log-book, and in the uncanny solitude, stood gazing at it, the last entry was—"Closed down". For how long, he wondered? It was as well that no one knew then the exact span of time before Hitler's Germany and his supporting nations would be overthrown. It was a long, long time.

## CHAPTER IV: AFTER THE WAR

*The Service reopens in June, 1946 . . . victory parade a great triumph . . . "Picture Page" runs until 1952 . . . the 1948 Olympics . . . the birth of Eurovision . . . "What's My Line?" begins.*

TELEVISION lay dormant from Black Friday, 1 September 1939 until 7 June 1946. Occasionally, during the war, references were made to it. As early as August, 1940, the infamous Dr Goebbels used a propaganda trick at the opening of the German Radio Export Exhibition and told 30,000 Berliners that he hoped they would shortly be able to witness a German air and naval attack on a British convoy in the Channel. Arrangements for televising an actual attack were being considered and if the experiment proved successful, German television set owners might be given opportunities of seeing other German war successes in the making. As far as we were concerned, he could go and tell that one to the Marines!

In February, 1945, Mr Attlee, then Deputy Prime Minister, said that whilst he had not the slightest doubt that we would lead the world in television after the war, he expected that in ten years or so, a great many places of entertainment would have to close down because people would be able to obtain all the entertainment they desired in their own homes. Television did, in fact, come to life very briefly in February 1945, when a private demonstration was given at Alexandra Palace for members of the Commonwealth Broadcasting Conference; the delegates forecast that television would be in 10,000,000 homes by 1955. The announcer for this closed circuit demonstration was Jasmine Bligh.

What a contradiction of early days came in April, 1945, when London make-up experts agreed with the view of American engineers that red-haired, green-eyed Geraldine Fitzgerald was the ideal type

for televising because her striking colouring would transmit so well. What did the televistor's dream look like—she had a wealth of red hair—flaming Irish red hair. She had blue-green eyes that easily reflected the changing light with all the beauty of sunlight playing on deep running water. She had a forehead of speckled egg delicacy, lips that needed no more than a smear of lipstick to make them perfect, cheekbones like tailored shoulders, and a nose that twitched when she smiled. The ban on red-heads was obviously out!

The war had inevitably brought about a number of changes in high level B.B.C. personnel. Mr F. W. Ogilvie, who had succeeded Sir John Reith as Director-General on 1 October 1938, resigned in January, 1942. Sir John Reith, of course, was the B.B.C.'s first Director-General. He later became Lord Reith. On 26 January 1942, Sir Cecil Graves, K.C.M.G., and Mr R. W. Foot, O.B.E., M.C., were appointed Joint Directors-General, but Graves resigned in June, 1943, and Foot was given the appointment of sole Director-General—on the same day, as it happened, that Mr W. J. Haley (later Sir William Haley) became Editor-in-Chief. In March, 1944, Haley became Director-General. Sir William Haley's value to the B.B.C. was far-reaching. He is a man of unwavering devotion to a principle in which he sincerely believes, and no one, not even a Prime Minister, could make him alter course against his will. The story is told of the Broadcast Allied Expeditionary Forces programme service during the war (it ran a year) in which the B.B.C. had altered the original title. General Eisenhower felt so strongly about it that he discussed that point with Winston Churchill. The great man, in due course, took the matter up with the B.B.C. leaving no doubt in anyone's mind that he thought Eisenhower was right. The title stayed as Haley wished it. Churchill could run a war; he could not run the B.B.C. with Haley at its head. Sir William Haley remained as Director-General until June, 1952. Sir Ian Jacob took office as his successor in December of the same year. He was succeeded by the present Director-General, Mr Carleton Greene, in 1959.

One man of high office who was missing when post-war television began, was its original Director, Gerald Cock, who had left the country. Maurice Gorham was appointed Controller in his place. Many of the old familiar names were back—Cecil Madden, Peter Bax, Denis Johnston and Jasmine Bligh, and at three o'clock on 7 June 1946,

the Postmaster-General, the Earl of Listowel, reopened the B.B.C. Television service. Jasmine Bligh was there as announcer and one item brought memories crowding back to the pre-war staff. It was the showing of the Mickey Mouse cartoon, *Mickey's Gala Première*, the film which had been the last televised item in September, 1939.

Distinguished personalities appeared on that first day. Margot Fonteyn, Mantovani and his Orchestra, and Henry Oscar, starring in Bernard Shaw's *The Dark Lady of the Sonnets*. Leslie Mitchell was back as compere, but by courtesy of British Movietone News Ltd. Cabaret Cartoons, presented on Saturday, 8 June, was notable because it was the last programme to be produced by Cecil Madden on television; he was then whisked away to control events from a planner's desk. The Beverley Sisters, the Madden discoveries of war-time days, were in this last show, and appropriately enough, since Madden's name has always been associated with glamour, the Windmill girls were on parade for his swan song.

Television was now beginning to gather momentum as it set about its task of retrieving much lost ground. It had to find its own material in an austere England of 1946, so different from the England after the 1914-1918 war. The first great war was a soldier's war; civilians in London were far, far away from the battle lines. The West End shows went on in full cry. Was not *Chu Chin Chow* born during this period? The second war was totally different. London was as much in the firing line and as dangerous as the trench warfare for the troops in the first war, and although the show went on at the Windmill—"We Never Closed"—life was too dangerous for show business to flourish other than in service camps spread all over the world. Before the war when television was a novelty there was so much packaged material available to the B.B.C.—whole shows, whole troupes, whole orchestras and a complete ballet company. Television was just fun; now it had to fight a commercial battle as the entertainment business generally became more suspicious of its potential impact. It was cat watching mouse for the next move.

The B.B.C.'s first move of any consequence was a great triumph. They televised the Victory Parade of 1946 and in doing so opened the eyes of the world to the realities of television. More than ten nations

asked the Radio trade for details of the transmission and reception. Their representatives in London were astounded at what they saw on British television screens and visitors from Norway, France, Belgium, Sweden, Iceland, Denmark, Holland, and Czechoslovakia went to Alexandra Palace to see television in action at the transmitting end. This inspired the world. The producer of this B.B.C. success was Philip Dorte, and the commentators were Freddie Grisewood and Richard Dimbleby—that prince of all great historic moments—the complete master of a dignified occasion. At the 1946 Victory Parade, when making a reference to a hat worn by Princess Elizabeth, Dimbleby remarked “You will forgive a man for saying only that it is a hat with feathers on it.” It was, in fact, more than that—for the *Evening Standard* fashion columnist went into raptures over it, and described the hat as one of the great successes of the show. It was not just a hat with feathers on it, it was an ostrich feathered toque in turquoise blue! One freak of transmission made the Victory procession clearly visible on a television screen in Minehead, Somerset—169 miles from London. It was all most encouraging.

There were two new announcers with Jasmine Bligh—Winifred Shotter, so well known for her performances in some of the Aldwych farces with the irresistible combination of Tom Walls, Ralph Lynn, Robertson Hare, Yvonne Arnaud and Mary Brough—what a team! The male announcer was McDonald Hobley, who had been the chief announcer at the Forces Radio Station—“Radio SEAC” in Ceylon. Hobley was to make his mark in post-war television quite considerably. Jan Bussell and Ann Hogarth were manipulating their amusing puppets in June 1946, and in the same month the commentators for the Test Match at Lord’s were E. W. Swanton and Brian Johnston, a team which has flourished in all these post-war years.

Occasionally, the B.B.C. staged wrestling; it was apparently a useful stop-gap in an emergency, but was later regarded by those in high office as being too undignified for television, and was quietly dropped.

The pre-war policy of presenting plenty of plays proved immensely successful again. There were many in the early days after the war—*The Importance of Being Earnest*, *They Flew Through Sand*, *Saint Joan*, *Jeannie* with Barbara Mullen, *As You Like It*, *The Shop at Sly Corner*.

A very young-looking Kenneth More played Mr Badger in A. A. Milne's *Toad of Toad Hall*.

Picture Page took the air again for the 263rd time with Joan Gilbert having succeeded Madden as Commander-in-Chief. Joan was already a seasoned campaigner and had been associated with Picture Page for a year or so before the war. She started as the Editor's staff scout and later became Assistant Editor. She had made a name for herself on "In Town Tonight" and did a tremendous job during the war when she slept in a box above the Royal Box at the Criterion Theatre and there worked and originated at least three big Forces programmes—Hello Gibraltar, the Empire Party shows from the Overseas League in which she was hostess and quiz-mistress, and the American Eagle Club, a programme in which United States servicemen broadcast to North America. So popular was her programme to Gibraltar that she was invited by the Governor to fly out and meet her thousands of service friends. "The Lady of the Rock" was a big success.

Joan Gilbert holds one record in television which may stand unchallenged. She appeared virtually every week from 1946-58, a remarkable achievement. When Picture Page ended its phenomenal run on 12 March 1952, after a total of over 600 performances she began a programme called Joan Gilbert's Diary in which she had a roving commission and visited oyster beds, went down a coal-mine, wore fire-fighting equipment and was nearly overcome by the flames. When Dorte asked Joan if she would like to jump from a helicopter carrying a microphone she did at least draw the line at that. There was precious little else that this versatile star of television would not tackle. Her approach to Picture Page and its essential ingredient of topicality was that as events happened she hoped the viewers would say to themselves "Will this be on Picture Page?". More often than not it was. In October, 1947, Joan Gilbert left on the Golden Arrow for Paris with Sylvia Peters, announcer, accompanied by Imlay Watts (Mr "Fix It"—much more about him in due course) to put on a special edition of Picture Page for French television. The invitation to go to Paris came after the B.B.C. had done a most successful television cabaret called "Ici Paris". Many French artistes appearing in it took back to Paris glowing accounts of the success of Picture Page. The passage of years merely seemed to stimulate it with new life. Cecil Madden and Joan

Gilbert with Joan Miller in the pre-war era and, of course, Leslie Mitchell, did a great job with what proved to be a great programme.

On 27 July 1946, Bernard Shaw helped the B.B.C. to scoop the newsreels. They televised a ninetieth birthday interview given a few days previously to their own unit at Ayot St Lawrence. This pioneer B.B.C. newsreel showed Shaw, frail, patriarchal, emerging from his favourite summer-house. He then proceeded to give a recipe for happiness. It was this: "Being so busy doing what you like all the time that you have no time left to consider whether you are happy." The great man concluded his performance by shaking hands with himself!

In September, television cameras were allowed into a church for the first time. On Battle of Britain Sunday a service was televised from St George's R.A.F. Chapel of Remembrance at Biggin Hill, famous war-time fighter station. It was attended by relatives of the "Few", the few who had lost their lives as the supreme sacrifice for unparalleled courage in the golden sunlight of those summer days of 1940; courage which shaped the destiny of the free world. Towards the end of September the B.B.C. asked for complaints from viewers to guide them in future programme planning. Of the first 129 opened, 123 tele-viewers sent heartiest congratulations on the programmes—three people only—one anonymous—roundly condemned television. Favourite programmes were plays, outside broadcasts, Picture Page, fashions and cookery demonstrations by Philip Harben.

In December, however, the authorities bit off a little more than they could chew when they conducted an experiment in hypnotic influence on television, with the assistance of Mr Peter Casson. The test was carried out on a closed circuit in the studios at Alexandra Palace with such success that it was immediately considered dangerous to try it over the air. Two tests were made. In the first about a dozen B.B.C. staff volunteered to be hypnotized in the studios, and five of them went to sleep; but the most interesting point was that one person in a party watching a television screen in a darkened room across the corridor also fell under the hypnotic influence, although Mr Casson was not then addressing the viewing audience.

In the second test Mr Casson made a direct attempt to hypnotize six people watching the screen in a darkened room. Four of them went to sleep and of these, two needed waking up! Because of the success of

this experiment and the consequent danger of hypnotizing viewers who might not have anyone at hand to wake them, it was decided that an hypnotic television broadcast would not be advisable.

Mr Casson, who felt that he had proved his skill beyond measure of doubt, was most angry and described the Corporation's attitude as "Fantastic". There was no danger, he said, and a psychologist confirmed that hypnotic sleep can be ended easily by suggestion, but if this suggestion is not given for any reason, people wake up in due course. It was still not good business. The object of the B.B.C. has never been to encourage viewers to go to sleep whilst watching television; sometimes, perhaps, they have done it unwittingly!

One change of personnel in 1946 was the departure of Jasmine Bligh—"Miss Television"; she went farming in Ireland and was replaced by Gillian Webb. Thousands of post-war televiewers have, without knowing it, heard the voice of Jasmine Bligh. She has been the story-teller in a great many "Noddy" programmes.

George More O'Ferrall was adding to his pre-war reputation as an extremely efficient producer and was turning out one success after another; he and Michael Barry, the present Head of Drama, made invaluable contributions towards building up B.B.C. drama to its unparalleled position in world entertainment today. Richard Hearne, the lovable Mr Pastry, was a great favourite as far back as 1946. The *Radio Times* said of him then "He knows all the tricks of clowning and has a keener insight into the psychology of humour than many comedians today."

The year 1947 struck an unusual television note. The fuel and power crisis forced B.B.C. television to close down from 10 February until 11 March, and even when it was resumed it was restricted to evening programmes only; a full service did not operate again until 28 April. The closure brought considerable disappointment just before *La Bohème* was to have been televised from the Cambridge Theatre; never before had an opera been televised from the stage of a theatre. The transmission was accomplished sometime later. The period that television was off the air was used by the B.B.C. as a testing time for potential women announcers as one was wanted to replace Gillian Webb who had recently left the Corporation to marry an American Serviceman. On trial for an extended period was Sylvia Peters; first a

test, then another, then on trial for a week, then on trial for a month, and then three months, before she was finally taken on the staff. Why so much uncertainty? Largely, because the B.B.C. were looking preferably for a blonde as a foil for Winifred Shotter, the other announcer, who was a brunette. In the end they could find no blonde in the same street as a television announcer as Sylvia Peters, and when in due course Winifred Shotter left, the blonde search began again—with the same result. Mary Malcolm, another brunette, got the job. Just as Leslie Mitchell, Jasmine Bligh and Elizabeth Cowell had formed an excellent trio before the war, so did McDonald Hobley, Sylvia Peters and Mary Malcolm in these post-war years. Sylvia Peters who got the job initially through answering an advertisement in an evening paper has made more than 20,000 appearances on television. She has walked with Kings and Queens and met hundreds of the world's great personalities. Her greatest moment—believe it or not—when she met Laurel and Hardy—former heroes, who gave her their autographs, now much treasured possessions. Her most stirring historical memory was the privilege of being on duty on Coronation Day. In 1951, Sylvia Peters was the first television announcer to give a Royal Command performance at the Victoria Palace. She had, however, begun her career on the stage, and when she answered the B.B.C.s advertisement in 1947 Sylvia was just finishing in a revue at the Coliseum with Bud Flanagan.

In June, 1947, the B.B.C. completed its first year of post-war television. The *Daily Telegraph* viewed the year as one of accomplishment and their correspondent wrote:

The B.B.C. service, abruptly suspended when the bombs burst on Warsaw, has not merely recovered lost ground, but has passed the point reached in September, 1939. Future prospects are much more promising and positive than they were in pre-war days. The great difference is that while before the war, the main obstacle was public reluctance to buy, today the problem is to produce the sets to meet demand. Television sets are now selling in the London area four or five times as fast as in pre-war days, but owing to the shortage of cathode ray tubes and certain other vital components total production is only about 2,000 sets a month.

A technical development of special significance was the first filming

direct from the television screen, which enabled the event to be shown again on film in the evening. It was the Service of Remembrance from the Cenotaph—the first occasion on which Prince Philip appeared with the Royal Family at a great national occasion in London.

It was in this same month of November, 1947, that the B.B.C. televised the marriage of H.R.H. Princess Elizabeth with Lieutenant Philip Mountbatten, R.N. Cameras placed outside Buckingham Palace enabled viewers to see the departure of the Queen, and then the King with his daughter. The commentators at the Palace were Leslie Mitchell and Geoffrey Sumner. Another camera position in Broad Sanctuary brought viewers the scenes outside Westminster Abbey with John Snagge as commentator but the wedding service itself was broadcast on sound only. Television programmes were interrupted later in the day to show the Royal couple leaving for their honeymoon and a film of the wedding scenes was repeated later in the evening. This was another outstanding success for B.B.C. television.

A month later a most important executive change took place when Maurice Gorham resigned as Controller and was succeeded by Norman Collins, originally Head of the Light programme. Collins was to become a dynamic force in post-war television. His first year proved to be one of special significance for it included the televising of the Olympic Games. In addition a Mr David F. Bluemel of Ladysmith Road, Enfield, was the purchaser of the 50,000th Television Licence, and got himself on Picture Page as a result of it. A flea's heartbeat seen through a microscope was televised and in November the B.B.C., though indirectly, was responsible for closing the famous Lido in Paris for a night. The fabulous Lido girls flew to England to appear on B.B.C. television. Fog delayed their returning aircraft. There was no show at the Lido that night.

B.B.C. television broke all records during the Olympic Games in the greatest fortnight in its history. From 2.45 p.m. on 29 July when the emitron cameras first opened up on Wembley Stadium until the evening of 14 August, the total time expended on television outside broadcasts was 68 hours 29 minutes—an average of nearly five hours a day. This was in addition to regular transmissions.

The events were handled by a team of commentators, including

Richard Dimbleby, broadcaster, author and newspaper editor who had joined the B.B.C. as the first News Observer in 1936 and remained on the staff until 1946. He had travelled thousands of miles during the war in thirteen countries. By 1948 Dimbleby had made over 4,000 broadcasts and recordings. Some of his colleagues at the Olympics were—Ian Orr-Ewing, then Television Outside Broadcasts Manager; Pat Landsberg, who had been at Alamein with the 10th Armoured Division and in Abyssinia with Wingate; Dudley Lister, All Ranks Imperial Services and British Amateur Heavyweight Champion in 1925, a regular soldier with a distinguished war record—he won the M.C. near Ypres in the First World War with The Buffs, and was mentioned in despatches after the first Commando raid on the Lofoten Islands in 1941; Roy Moor, Jack Crump, John Webb, Freddie Milton, Peter Wilson, Jiminy Jewell, Michael Henderson, Bill Allenby, and, of course, Peter Dimmock, war-time R.A.F. pilot who had joined the television service in May, 1946, as an Outside Broadcasts Producer specializing in sports events. Now, as Head of Outside Broadcasts, Dimmock is an integral part of B.B.C. television.

The staff-work for this gigantic operation was carried out with scarcely a hitch and is a great tribute to the men behind the scenes. Dorte, Orr-Ewing and Dimmock, on the presentation side, worked hand in hand with the engineers under the guidance of T. H. Bridge-water. Between them they captured great moments—Don Finlay's heart-breaking stumble at the last hurdle; the fantastic Dillard winning the 100 metres; Arthur Wint pulling a muscle that robbed him of victory, and the incredible Fanny Blankers-Koen, probably the greatest woman athlete of all time. The Games filled England to overflowing with overseas visitors. Here was a wonderful opportunity of proving to them that Great Britain still led the world in television progress and development, and the radio industry was not slow in seizing the chance. Receiving equipment was installed in the centres, camps, embassies and legations. Technically it was a triumph of old and new; one mobile unit used for outdoor track events at the Stadium had been in use since 1936; the other was entirely new. This involved the new CPS Emitron; it could operate successfully even at sunset and was the result of intensive development at E.M.I. between 1946 and 1948. The B.B.C. had begun in 1936 with the standard emitron cameras and these were augmented

for outside broadcast purposes in the pre-war era by the more sensitive super emitrons. Since there had been no advance because of the war-years the service reopened with these two types, but E.M.I. began at once to widen and improve the field. The result—the new CPS Emitron—produced a very big advance in camera tubes and gave a much better picture; it was richer, clearer, devoid of smears and, perhaps the most important of all, had for the first time a useful degree of depth and focus—a quality which enables the viewer to see both the foreground and the background equally clearly. Previously the foreground had been clearly defined but the background was a mere blur. This work was stimulated in the B.B.C. by T. C. MacNamara, in charge of television engineering planning.

Although, in magnitude, the televising of the Olympic Games dwarfed all other outside broadcast activities in the summer of 1948, viewers also saw events at the Royal Tournament, the International Horse Show, the Wimbledon Lawn Tennis Championships, Royal Ascot, and two Test Matches. Two events occurred in light entertainment which attracted considerable attention. Josephine Baker paid her first visit to this country since the war to fulfil an exclusive television engagement, and on 14 July, an all-French Company, including Annabella, the film star, Yvette Chauvire, the prima ballerina of the Paris Opera, Andre Luguet and Francois Perier, two of the leading French actors, and Georges Ulmer, the most popular French comedian, made an exclusive television appearance. The most successful of the English variety stars, whom the B.B.C. were able to secure for television, despite the continuing opposition of the commercial managements, were Jack and Claude Hulbert; they appeared in a regular series—“The Hulbert Follies”.

Tremendous progress was made in all branches of B.B.C. television in 1949. In February, on the technical side, a new outside broadcast unit with Pye Photicons was brought into commission at the Albert Hall; the zoom lens was also introduced. In March, the L.C.C. agreed to the B.B.C. developing the White City site as a television centre, the Boat Race was televised for the first time from a launch, and tele-recording began. In November, the B.B.C. bought Lime Grove, and then, on 17 December, B.B.C. television took the first of many steps in the growth of its television baby—Sutton Coldfield opened; the

tentacles of television were beginning to spread like the octopus they are today.

There was an interesting Picture Page on 23 February. It featured B. B. and C.—Birkinshaw, Bridgewater and Campbell, who discussed the early technical problems and told some of the stories of the pioneering days; Cecil Madden in a reminiscent mood, Mary Allan, the make-up queen, Peter Bax, Leslie Mitchell, also in a nostalgic frame of mind, Paul Robeson, and one—Cyril Fletcher, billed as “Television discovery” reciting “Dreaming oh My Darling Love of Thee”. A very young Cyril Fletcher played a prominent part in these early days of television. One story has been handed down through the ages about Eve Moir, Cecil Madden’s secretary, who is supposed to have waved a handkerchief out of her office window if Madden had been let down, and wanted a turn in a hurry. Cyril Fletcher, living within eye-distance of Alexandra Palace, would see the signal, and arrive breathless in the studio all ready with his act. Can you imagine the young comedian sitting glued to a stool from two o’clock until nine, hopefully, anxiously, awaiting the great call—which may never have come, and finally exclaiming in despair and disgust “Blast, they don’t want me again today!” Mr Fletcher is not too inclined to put this story in the bracket of “The whole truth, and nothing but the truth”, but says it would have been quite feasible if he had owned a telescope; young comedians in those days, however, had little practical use for such an instrument. It’s a good story, though, so why not let it stand?

Betty Astell, who became Mrs Cyril Fletcher at St Martin-in-the-Fields in 1941, having met her bridegroom in a Henry Hall Guest Night, was another star performer in the young days of television development. This is a husband and wife partnership which has flourished on one success after another in show business—summer shows, Christmas pantomimes as well as many sound and television broadcasts. Cyril Fletcher’s odd odes are a specific brand of comedy which he has made exclusively his own; there have been no imitators. More recently he has stamped his bubbling personality on millions of televiwers in “What’s My Line?”. Mrs Fletcher’s association with television began in days so long ago that her youthful vigour as the years pass would make it difficult to believe were the date mentioned.

Let Arthur Askey share the secret with her, for they were contemporaries. "Big Hearted" Arthur—the great little man of British comedy, the star of "Band Waggon", was very much in on television at the start. Here is another star that has remained high in the heavens. "This is Your Life, Arthur Askey", spoke Eamonn Andrews one night; what better tribute to a great little clown.

Another famous artiste whose whole career was shaped by pre-war television was Edmundo Ros, who came to England in June, 1937, to study music at the Royal Academy. In his spare time he played the drums, Cuban accompaniments and percussion instruments in the Don Marino Bareto Trio, a combination used extensively by B.B.C. television, quite often as a stop-gap. The war came, Bareto left the country, and Ros formed his own band, playing Clubs like Cosmo, Astor and Bagatelle, and when George Black put a Carmen Miranda scene into his London Palladium show *Best Bib and Tucker* with Tommy Trinder impersonating Miss Miranda, Edmundo Ros and his distinctive brand of music provided Latin-American atmosphere. This achievement represented a phenomenal rise in an amazingly short time. Edmundo Ros was at the top when post-war television got under way. Geraldo, musical director of ENSA, was the first dance band to be televised in the post-war world; Edmundo Ros was the second.

He has since made countless television appearances, none probably that he remembers more than a children's programme in 1952 when he sang a song about a parrot he had lost, and invited children to let him know just how they thought this parrot might look, with a prize offered for the best answer. The result was shattering. Parrots arrived by every post—live ones, dead ones, stuffed ones, parrots of all denominations and colours. The prize was awarded after some difficulty to Christopher Bell, and the fountain pen presented to him was the first gift ever made on B.B.C. television. In a world of fast-changing moods and tempo the Latin-American music of Edmundo Ros will always hold its own. The Edmundo Ros Club in Regent Street, the old Cocoanut Grove, is ample proof of its continued popularity.

The Boat Race of 1949 employed no less than 100 technicians and commentators, nine cameras, and every available piece of outside broadcast equipment. In televising the race from beginning to end the

B.B.C. achieved their greatest television triumph. Early tests had shown that one of the chief difficulties in operating a television camera in the bows of a fast-moving launch is the vibration caused by the boat's engine, the effect of which is increased when a long focus telephoto lens is used.

A camera suspension was devised to reduce the effect of this vibration and brought instantaneous success, and although the launch fell behind at times, and was, of course, subject to wash, viewers had a complete and thrilling view of the race—a better view than anyone except those aboard the launches immediately behind the crews. The greatest thrill, undoubtedly, was enjoyed by a Mr H. J. Ricder who had a good reception of the transmission for about twenty minutes—in Cape Town! It was on this date that the B.B.C. really mastered the art of tele-recording; a film was shown later in the evening.

The crews themselves put on a tremendous performance for the occasion, greater than could have been devised in fiction drama. It was a fantastic race, which Cambridge won by a mere 15 ft over a hazardous course of 4 miles 374 yds. Bill McGowran, writing in the *London Evening News*, began his account of the race with this paragraph:

A black swan brought luck to Cambridge today in the fiercest finest Boat Race in living memory. Oxford led all the way to Barnes Bridge. Then an Australian black swan scuttled across the course ahead of the crews and bobbed angrily in their wake. From that point the destinies of the race changed. Jennens, the Cambridge stroke, at once made the first of the spurts that ultimately led to Cambridge victory by one quarter of a length—the closest result since the only dead-heat in 1877.

The weather forecast was first given on television in 1949; the year the moon was televised for the first time. Appearing on Picture Page was Barbara Kelly, billed as the leading Canadian Radio actress here to study television in order to be ready when television starts in Canada in two years' time. Picture Page now had an offspring—a junior edition which included animals from Pets Corner at the Zoo. It was introduced by Mary Malcolm with interviews conducted by Max Robertson. Yes, 1949 was a big year in this television story.

The same could be said of 1950 since in August the first television transmission between two countries was accomplished—from Calais

to London—the birth of Eurovision, a title first conceived by George Campey, the present Head of B.B.C. Publicity. Two studios were brought into action at Lime Grove, the first in May, and the second in December. In February, election night was celebrated by a special studio programme of maps and score-board with commentaries, a specially prepared television newsreel and outside broadcast scenes in Trafalgar Square. The service kept open until one o'clock. *FLOTSAM'S FOLLIES*, a musical, lyrical and topical revue composed by B. C. Hilliam (Flotsam) contained an interesting name in fifth place on the bill, that of Tony Hancock, now Anthony Hancock, Esq., star of "East Cheam Rep" and all points west, east, north and south, the big boy of British light entertainment.

It was about 1950 that television was becoming a key talking point on a number of major issues. Was it having a detrimental effect on the cinemas? "No", replied Sam Goldwyn, who is quoted as having said that television was acting as a stimulant to film producers. People can see bad television for nothing, but they won't pay good money to see bad pictures. Was it having an effect on the country's reading habits? "No", said the Birmingham Public Library whose traffic in books was as heavy as ever. On the other hand, Mr H. M. Butler, headmaster of Queen Mary's Grammar School, Walsall, said that television had adversely affected homework, particularly noticeable among boys of 13. Compton Mackenzie, speaking in Huddersfield, urged parents not to allow young children to watch television until they could read.

There was also the question of a roving camera's eye at various sporting and public events. This presented a new social problem. What redress, for instance, had the overworked businessman, when the television camera found him in the corner of a night-club when his nearest and dearest believed him to be in Scunthorpe buying pig-iron! Hope was expressed that the law would eventually regard television as one of the risks of modern society—just like crossing a road. This, the law seems to have done.

More important executive changes took place at the B.B.C. in 1950. George Barnes became the first post-war Director of Television and Cecil McGivern was appointed Controller following the resignation of Norman Collins.



#### THE "PICTURE PAGE" GIRL

JOAN MILLER, at the switchboard from which she linked the first television magazine programme, "Picture Page", which had its first showing in October, 1936. It ran all-told for over 600 performances. Today, JOAN MILLER is a



#### "MR TELEVISION" HIMSELF

CECIL MADDEN, who launched television for the Radio Show in 1936 as Programme Organizer, has the whole world of show business as his friends. With him in this picture are JOAN GILBERT and IRENE MICHENER, at a special edition of "Picture Page" produced to celebrate the sale of 100,000 television licences in February, 1949

#### THE OLD GANG—B B C

BIRKINSHAW (extreme left), BRIDG WATSON (extreme right) and CAMPBELL (centre), the original engineering team, not chosen because the first letters of their names produce B.B.C. but because of great skill and experience! They are appearing here in "Picture Page" with JOAN GILBERT



In April, 1950, B.B.C. television put on a programme to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Madame Tussaud's death—a remarkable story of the founder of the world famous waxworks. Hers was a life of many disasters, all of them overcome—the effects of the French Revolution, financial difficulties, a broken marriage, two shipwrecks, and the Bristol Riots. After her death the great exhibition had to survive a serious fire and, finally, the German bombs of 1940. The highlights of the story were told by Reginald Edds of the Tussaud's staff, and Richard Dimbleby, who had recently recovered from a bout of chicken-pox. The lighter part of the programme was the unveiling of three new portraits in wax—Joy Nichols, Jimmy Edwards and Dick Bentley, the team which achieved radio fame so swiftly in "Take it from Here". Michael Henderson, the producer, used the old restaurant as a television studio; it had become disused because the kitchens had been bombed. Old Jim in wax, eh; now, of course, he is principal of a school for sons of gentlefolk!

Wilfred Pickles and Muffin the Mule were some of the performers who passed through a freshly painted apple-green door in a back street in not the most salubrious part of Shepherd's Bush one Sunday in May, 1950, and they helped to provide the first transmission—the Sunday Children's Hour, from the Lime Grove Studios. John Pudney, writing at the time, said:

In Britain the expansion of television has been one of the most far-reaching social phenomena since the war. Not the least satisfying aspect of this is that (at the time of writing) it appears to be one of the few really harmless scientific developments which the human race has managed to develop in this country. Month by month its new audience has grown in area and in density. It is an audience with a greedy appetite for that unique novelty—an armchair view of the event at the moment of its taking place.

Muffin the Mule, by the way, or rather Annette Mills, created an absolute furore among the children on Christmas Day, 1950, when she announced—"I don't think Muffin and I will be back for some time." This brought a deluge of letters in handwriting of all ages. The B.B.C. could not find room in the programme for Muffin until 4 February 1951. The young expressed its displeasure in no uncertain terms.

Outside broadcasts were becoming more and more ambitious and one such broadcast from Southend-on-Sea brought the following letter from a viewer:

Richard Dimbleby is not a favourite of mine on television so it will not be as a fan when I send my honest and sincere congratulations on the performance I witnessed during the rescue episode at Southend-on-Sea. As a trained nurse I found myself worrying about Mr Dimbleby's weight in carrying out such a strenuous exercise. I think that it was a very brave act and I do not think he should be allowed to risk such dangers for the sake of us viewers.

A new friend for children made his television bow in July. It was Andy Pandy; he was to become a well loved character. Gradually the stars of today were beginning to twinkle.

August brought another television landmark when B.B.C. television reached out across the sea for the first time to the French coast at Calais. It was a great feat by British engineers; what is more it was such a success that French newspapers carried banner headlines of this sort—"Vive La Television says Happy Calais." Eurovision was brought a step nearer by this momentous broadcast. Sunday, 27 August 1950 was indeed a red-letter day in the progress of European and, indeed, world television. In October the B.B.C. staged the first television relay from an aeroplane—a Bristol freighter carrying television cameras and transmitting equipment over London. The man responsible for both these historical transmissions was Peter Dimmock, then Assistant Head of Television Outside Broadcasts.

Television started 1950 with two studios. It began 1951 with two more. This meant more hours of camera rehearsals for major productions and so ensured more polish and finish. It meant better quality pictures and much less strain on producers, technicians and artistes. In January, 1950, B.B.C. television transmitted 117 programmes. In January, 1951, the number had risen to 174. There was one programme a week for children in January, 1950. There were seven in January, 1951. Evening transmission time was increased. Holme Moss opened on 12 October, television cameras visited the state room at 10, Downing Street for the first time, and the first televised election address took place in October with Lord Samuel speaking on behalf of the Liberal Party.

On New Year's Eve a Watch-night service was televised for the first time from Wesley's Chapel, City Road, London.

Television's comedian-in-chief in 1951 was Terry Thomas. Show business has proved over and over again that the most popular comic performers are those who strike a vein of humour and by dint of great application make it exclusively their own. For as long as music-hall and musical comedy patrons can remember there has always been a place for the "dude" or "silly-ass" comedian. The ever changing character of life, however, had made it necessary for him to do more than weave himself round a lamp-post, wear a monocle and an opera cloak, and talk with an exaggerated "old boy—old bean" accent. He is now required to pull something of greater relish than a mere handful of chestnuts out of the glossy hat. No one realized this more than Terry Thomas. In addition to a highly individual style he is an artiste of great talents. His carnation and cigarette holder is as symbolically Thomas as the cigar was Churchill or the eyebrows were Robey, and behind this singularly smooth approach to life there lies a great capacity for taking pains and the razor-keen observation of a born impressionist. He has conquered widely diverse fields, has adapted himself to an extending pattern and has, indeed, come a long way in the world of entertainment since his first professional engagement in 1939. Terry Thomas has reached the top.

An experiment in ballet began to prove its success. The Television Ballet Group had begun very quietly in the previous October with the revival of *Ballet for Beginners*. The series of one programme a month, followed by the Children's version, for six months, offered a great opportunity to put under contract a small group of first-class dancers to be available for all types of work as well as for the exacting classical roles. That was the start of the Television Ballet Group; it spread its wings from *Ballet for Beginners* to *Madam Butterfly*, the Bobby Howes programmes, and the dancers even tried their hands, or feet, at showing Mr Pastry how to do it. Felicity Gray, the creator, had thus formed the first Television Ballet Group in the world; she had done more than that; she had shaped a policy for the future. Perhaps, without realizing it, she had created the idea of The Toppers of today. Sometime later when Richard Afton was producing a glamour show he needed a name for his regular dancers. Top hats are always associated

with glamour; he called the girls The Top Hatters; this was shortened at a later date to The Toppers. The Toppers have since brightened many an evening of male-viewing.

By 1951, television was unquestionably beginning to change the living habits of the people in Britain. The housing shortage caused by the war blitzing had forced families to double up with their daughters and their husbands and children, and between them they could easily invest in a television set. It opened up a great new vista for "Grandma", who was, perhaps, too old to go out for her entertainment. She remained, instead, glued to the television set missing nothing; overnight she had become an expert on Shakespeare or Ibsen, she disagreed with the referee's decision at a boxing match, and couldn't think what the England captain was up to when he decided to bat again instead of making West Indies follow on at the Oval. She became critical of many of the programmes and on the basis of paying her money felt entitled to have a say in things, and why not. Television's potential customers were all those people between the ages of 3 and 103. This afforded fair scope for imagination, but light entertainment on television was not without its problems. Ronnie Waldman, then Chief of Light Entertainment, writing in the *Radio Times*, said:

A recent issue of the American magazine *The New Yorker* had, for its cover illustration, a drawing by the brilliant cartoonist Peter Arno. It showed a television set, on the screen of which appeared a comedian obviously roaring out a stream of wise-cracks and equally obviously deriving an immense amount of satisfaction from his own wit and humour. In front of the television set was an armchair, and in the armchair there sat, bolt upright and hideously grim, a man whose utter loathing of the comedian, the programme, and presumably television itself surpasses all description. This in a nutshell is the basic problem of Light Entertainment in television. In the theatre or the cinema a titter in the one-and-nines can become a roar throughout the theatre and, of course, the audience have paid to come presumably because they like the stars in the show. What is the position for a television production? The audience usually consists of two or three people in their own home; they are surrounded by the everyday mundane things of life; there is no electric atmosphere of laughter or excitement, and they may happen to hate the particular star of that production.

Television technique was thus a different kettle of fish altogether, a

technique which, in all modesty, the collective brains of the staff of the B.B.C. have mastered and perfected in the light of hard experience. Ronnie Waldman, in due course, became General Manager of B.B.C. television promotions.

In February, 1951, the B.B.C. saluted Bing Crosby for his twenty years in show business. A recording by the Columbia Broadcasting System included a fabulous array of American talent—Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy, Ella Fitzgerald, Amos and Andy, Dorothy Kirsten, Louis Armstrong, Jack Teagarden, Judy Garland, Bob Hope, and, of course, Mr Crosby himself. Bing sings—only two words, but how full of magic and nostalgia.

In April, a series of five ninety-minute programmes began with the difficult task of reviewing fifty years of show business. Television's cavalcade of entertainment was called *The Passing Show*. Remember the turn of the century? *The Belle of New York* at the Shaftesbury, *Florodora* at the Lyric, Mr George Edwards' Gaiety Girls, Marie Lloyd, Lottie Collins, Gus Elen and Albert Chevalier, *Charley's Aunt*, "Soldiers of the Queen" and "Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay", Mr Lumiere's Cinematograph—and war in South Africa. And then—fifty years later—*Carousel* at Drury Lane, *King's Rhapsody* at the Palace, Show girls at the Folies Bergere, The Crazy Gang, Gracie Fields, Cicely Courtneidge, Sid Fields and Danny Kaye, *Worm's Eye View*, "Music, Music, Music" and "I taut I taw a puddy tat". Television from France—and war in Korea. These are the extremes of fifty years of show business, fifty years which saw the great days and the decline of the Gaiety musical comedies, knew ragtime and jazz, the waltz and the jive, the tango and the charleston.

Television offered a complete coverage of the ceremonies at the opening of the Festival of Britain and each month Television Drama presented a special Festival Theatre production of plays. Two classics, Shaw's *St Joan* and Congreve's *Ways of the World*, were followed by two original plays commissioned for television from J. B. Priestley and Terence Rattigan. All departments devised special programmes for these special five months.

And so to 16 July 1951 and—"What's My Line?" a "beat the panel" entertainment devised by Mark Goodson and Bill Todman with Barbara Kelly, Ted Kavanagh and Jerry Desmonde on the panel,

and Eamonn Andrews seeing fair play. Presented by T. Leslie Jackson and televised by arrangement with Columbia Broadcasting System and Maurice Winnick. Leslie Jackson writing in the *Radio Times* thought that one way and another this new idea looked like being a lot of fun—how right he was. Ten years, and like distinctive Highland whisky, still going strong. Gilbert Harding who was unable to appear on the first edition was in the chair for the second; Marghanita Laski appeared on the panel. "What's My Line?" was invented by a Californian, Mark Goodson, a former law student who did some radio announcing during a vacation, and was so impressed with a salary of \$22 a week that he threw away his law books and took up the new medium instead. He used to kill time by trying to guess the professions of complete strangers as he sipped Martinis in his favourite New York bar. This turned into a gambling game for his friends, with a small kitty on the results. It finished up as "What's My Line?" In due course Goodson owned half a dozen panel games syndicated all over the world; he shyly admits to being a millionaire and now drives around New York in a maroon-coloured Rolls, "Because Cadillac convertibles are nearly as common as mink these days". Goodson says that in a sense he owes his wife to his passion for panel games. She is a ravishing brunette from Alabama who won a beauty competition and met her future husband when she went to New York to audition for "What's My Line?". It was the first panel game to be seen on the British television screen and has outlasted all its rivals. The press have written it off many times but not so the public. Familiarity in this case has never bred contempt. An old friend is always welcome and it helps to keep Mr Goodson in Rolls. It would be a sad blow to prestige to have to go back to Cadillac convertibles!

Television's diverse effects upon the community were increasing almost daily. At an inquest on a woman who committed suicide after watching a television thriller the Coroner remarked "It is a pity that details of suicides are shown so that other people may imitate them". Was he right?—surely on stage and screen, as in books, life must be shown as it is. This was the genius of Shakespeare and Dickens, so many of whose characters died violently. There was the night when "What's My Line?" caught a criminal. He appeared as a challenger in the role of a frogman. His real background, however, was two years as

a clerk in a Stockbroker's office, a National Service Corporal in the Royal Marines, a biscuit salesman, unemployed, and a life-guard at Brighton. A bank manager looking in was instrumental in advising the police of the masquerade, and the challenger got fifteen months for false pretences which had included passing dud cheques. This was a far, far cry from 31 July 1910, when Hawley Harvey Crippin, the notorious murderer, became the first criminal to be arrested as a direct result of a wireless message when he stepped off the SS *Montrose* in Quebec. Television was thus following in the footsteps of radio in bringing a criminal to justice.

A real-life thriller took place unknown to viewers when Audrey Russell became the first commentator screened at work wearing £52,000 worth of diamonds. Unseen by the viewers and the Mayfair audience at the Jewel Ball in 1951, guards armed with pistols loosened in shoulder holsters watched her every movement; they had been alerted by rumours that known European jewel thieves were believed to have arrived in London for the Festival period. More than £1,000,000 of jewellery glittered, gleamed and sparkled before the television lights, the revolvers remained in their holsters; everything passed off without a hitch.

Youth was finding and taking its opportunities in television. The composer of an opus entitled "Sugar Chile Boogie" and hailed as the boogie-woogie prodigy of America, Sugar Chile Robinson, aged 12, arrived in England after a two and a half day flight from Havana. The maestro was obliged to undergo a long audience with the airport immigration officials and when finally released and questioned by the press, he drawled "I'm too sick to say anything, talk to my lawyer." His father, an ice and coal merchant from Detroit, a battery of publicity agents, his manager, and his lawyer travelled with him. This jazz juvenile was seen on television pounding the keys and beating the floor before beginning a variety tour. A member of his entourage described his performance modestly and to the point. "You ain't seen nothing like it." He was right!

We, apparently, had got an English counterpart. A special licence was obtained to allow Christine Taylor of Southend to appear on television in "Parade of Youth". Christine was 11, and wearing a sarong, a Zulu necklace, and blacked from head to foot, she sang a

modern version of "I wouldn't leave my little wooden hut for you". A modest opinion was also expressed after she had appeared. The blonde bombshell—a miniature Betty Hutton! Miss Taylor herself intimated her intention of later doing a burlesque of Salome. Youth was certainly having its fling.

And so to 1952, to the opening of Kirk o' Shotts and Wenvoe, to the broadcasting on sound and television of the Proclamation of Accession of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and the funeral of a beloved king—His late Majesty King George VI. The televising of the Lord Mayor's Banquet for the first time from Guildhall, and the end of Picture Page; a strong link with the happy pioneer days of Ally Pally had gone for ever.

Opposition to television by many bodies of entertainment was still considerable, but 1952 began with a big boost for television by the impresario, Claude Langdon, Managing Director of Empress Hall, Earls Court. After *Puss in Boots on Ice* had been televised on 30 December 1951, Empress Hall received 20,000 telephone calls to book seats; the staff worked a shift system to deal with them. As a result, the show was kept running an extra fortnight bringing in £50,000 worth of business. Langdon said that television was welcome at Empress Hall any time. On one occasion he discovered that two-thirds of a packed audience at a boxing programme were watching their first fight—all because they had recently seen boxing on television.

Bookmakers, too, had good reason to bless television. London bookmakers estimated that as a result of televising two days' racing from Kempton Park at Easter, viewers had wagered over £100,000. I am sure the estimates were correct. There is no easier and more fascinating way of losing money than watching racing on television! By August, 1952, the B.B.C. service had a 74 per cent coverage of England, Scotland and Wales and had brought television within reach of over three-quarters of the population through the stations at Sutton Coldfield (covering the Midlands), Holme Moss (north of England), Kirk o' Shotts (central Scotland) and Wenvoe (south Wales and parts of the west of England).

The B.B.C.s audience research department was busy providing reliable evidence of what the viewer liked best. They had found that

in 1951 the average viewer watched nearly five evening programmes in every ten. These were the days when social calls were frowned upon, and the visitor was usually obliged to grope about in the dark, keep still, and at all costs, refrain from talking. He might be given a drink if there was a lull in the proceedings, and then he was sent home with the painful knowledge that it would be better if he didn't come again. This sort of situation provided heaven-sent opportunities for house-breakers and one cartoonist struck an original note with a drawing of a burglar stumbling out of a house carrying a television set and remarking to his confederate "I got it while she was upstairs looking at her fur coat!" Audience research had found out, too, that in one week, seven of the twenty-eight evening programmes had an audience of over 2,000,000. The seven programmes were "What's My Line?" the 1951 Gang Show, I Made News, Kaleidoscope, The Inch Man, Through Fire and Water, and Top Hat Rendezvous.

Many television programmes were cancelled in February, 1952, after the nation had been profoundly shocked by the death of the King. The B.B.C. issued a special supplement to the *Radio Times* with revised programmes and asked all newsagents and booksellers to supply it free to their readers. Prefacing the programme details were these words:

It was the privilege of the B.B.C. to broadcast his beloved voice on many occasions to listeners in all parts of the world. Only a few short weeks ago, on the afternoon of Christmas Day, millions listened to what was to be his last message, and the words he spoke then, under the stress of deep emotion and with obvious physical effort, will echo poignantly today in the memory of all who heard them. The nation will, however, draw comfort in its bereavement from the knowledge that his high responsibilities devolve upon a daughter who has already shown the same devotion to duty and inspired the same affection. To our new Sovereign, and to His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh, we offer loyal greetings. God Save the Queen.

A schooldays' favourite of millions appeared on television in February, 1952. Did you ever read the *Magnet*? If you did then Bunter must have been as much your hero as he was mine. With Billy Bunter, played by Gerald Campion, and Kynaston Reeves, in the role of Quelch, form master of the Remove, were all the well loved characters

created by Frank Richards. There have been other fat boys in literature but none quite such a household name as Bunter. It is said that his character was based on four different people including an unnamed Victorian statesman. William George Bunter, the Owl of the Remove at Greyfriars, glutton, a bad liar and the butt of the whole school; pathetic, yet lovable! I say, you chaps, seen Quelch! Poor Bunter, life indeed had its problems for a fat fellow at Greyfriars. These problems have given infinite delight to television audiences everywhere.

It was on 12 March that the worthy veteran, Picture Page, dropped quietly from the television scene after an unparalleled run. Joan Gilbert filled the gap on the following Wednesday with "Joan Gilbert at Home". Humphrey Lestocq and Mr Turnip continued to fascinate the younger children in Whirligig, and George Cansdale, Superintendent of the London Zoo, had become a popular performer, although one of his programmes was brought to an abrupt end. He had brought an American flying squirrel to the studio and was opening a little box to reveal the squirrel's bright and beady eyes when the creature suddenly took a nip at his finger, ran up his sleeve, down his back, and escaped. The programme went off the air immediately.

A major step was taken in the development of Eurovision in July, 1952, when one week of test programmes were seen both in England and in France. The guides to Paris were Etienne Lalou, Jacqueline Joubert, Sylvia Peters and Richard Dimbleby. The French Ambassador in London and the British Ambassador in Paris spoke on behalf of their governments to inaugurate this great Paris-London television link. Viewers were then taken to the Eiffel Tower, the giant structure of 2,500,000 rivets. La Tour Eiffel was named after Gustave Eiffel who created it for the exposition of 1889—so essentially a part of the Parisian landscape that a Mr William Morris once troubled to climb to the top because he said that it was the only position in Paris from which he couldn't see the thing! Paris week, with its fashion show aboard the *Bateau-Mouche* and a visit to La Nouvelle Eve brought all the gaiety of the gayest of cities to British homes. Mr "Fix It" was again busy fixing on this trip.

## CHAPTER V: A RIVAL IN THE FIELD

*The Coronation in 1953. A great boost for Television sales . . . "Thank you, Ally Pally" . . . "Sportsview" begins . . . Commercial Television arrives . . . the American shows.*

THE advance in television popularity was now beginning to quicken. The Coronation in 1953 set the tide moving more swiftly than any individual event had been able to do before. The Coronation of 1937, the Victory Parade in 1946 and the Olympics in 1948 had certainly made an impression but they had only scraped the surface by comparison. The glittering and deeply moving scene of the crowning of Her Majesty with all its great traditions and intrinsic beauty was brought with amazing clarity of picture into countless homes; people without a television set on that day had made it their business to find someone suitably equipped, and they went home quite determined to do something about getting television for themselves; many an unsuspecting husband was badgered into spending his money whether he thought a television set was good business or a social curse. It had become the thing to say "Television, I wouldn't have it in my home for all the tea in China". When, in due course, you happened to visit the house in question and found the inhabitants clustered round a television screen gaping at every programme with passionate interest, the excuse usually had something to do with keeping up with the Joneses, or it is nice for Grandma! What it all really added up to was that John Citizen, if he was honest about it, was now accepting television as an essential commodity. It was becoming part of life itself.

Over 1,000,000 more licences for sound and television combined were taken out in 1954 than in 1953. The figure in 1954 was 3,248,892. In 1947 it had been only 14,560. By 1957 the figure of 1954 had been

doubled and the 10,000,000 mark was reached in 1960; 300 in 1936, 10,000,000 in 1960, and with a war in between, at that.

On 7 June 1952, Garter Principal King at Arms proclaimed from a balcony at St. James's Palace that Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II would be crowned in Westminster Abbey on Tuesday, 2 June 1953. This gave the B.B.C. almost exactly a year in which to plan and prepare the biggest outside broadcast ever contemplated. Sound radio faced its problems; none, however, compared with an issue which concerned television. Would permission be granted for live television cameras to be placed inside the Abbey during the service? Would their presence be regarded as one further intrusion into this most privileged sanctuary? The service, lasting two and a half hours, was bound to be a very considerable strain on those taking part, even without the knowledge that cameras would be constantly trained on them. Would there be something unseemly in the chance that a viewer would watch this solemn and significant service with a cup of tea or glass of beer at his elbow? It took some time to dispel some rooted objections, but once this was done, those in authority—the Earl Marshal, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the Minister of Works—took untold trouble to ensure the success of the television broadcast.

A few months before the Coronation, Peter Dimmock travelled to America to watch their television coverage of President Eisenhower's Inauguration and Parade in Washington. Dimmock was convinced from watching this great operation that processions should be covered as nearly as possible head-on and from slightly above, and it was further decided that Peter Dimmock should produce the television broadcast of the ceremony from inside the Abbey itself. It was not easy to find camera positions inside the Abbey, for, after all, the Abbey had not been built with a view to the possible requirements of television cameras, newsreels, colour films, still-photographers and commentators. The spaces devised for the camera-men were quickly nicknamed the "dog kennels" by the camera-men who were to sit there from the early hours until after the Queen had left the Abbey. Problems arose one after the other, the most serious of which it was not possible to resolve until a full rehearsal only a few days before the Coronation.

The Earl Marshal and Sir William McKie, director of music for the

Coronation, agreed to a B.B.C. request for a camera to be placed behind the Organ Console, but it had to be fixed, and more important still, it was to have no operator with it. It was hoped that it might be possible for an operator to sit beneath the fixed camera to turn the lens turret. This demanded the smallest camera-man the B.B.C. could possibly muster—a Mr Flanagan was chosen. Flanagan gave a demonstration of screwing himself up into the available space and the idea was found to be acceptable. A hitch in the proceedings came at a rehearsal when at the exact spot where Flanagan was to crouch he was faced, disconcertingly, by the point of a 'cello. Would this vital camera position have to be abandoned? It nearly was, until someone suggested that if the camera was raised only a fraction it might be possible for Eugene Pini, the 'cellist, to pass his bow under it, and for the point of the 'cello to be placed between Flanagan's feet. So there he was for the great occasion, equipped with headphones so as to be kept completely in the picture but not able to talk back to the producer; he sat uncomfortably and silently for the whole proceedings, but he was not forgotten and did, in fact, play one vital role. With Peter Dimmock having taken tremendous pains to account for the smallest detail with his traditional thoroughness he was suddenly faced with a situation for which, if the information was correct, he had made no provision. It was that the National Anthem was to be played for the Queen Mother's procession. This seemed unlikely but it had to be checked, but how? Only Flanagan in the midst of the orchestra could find the answer easily but he could not talk back, so Flanagan was asked to investigate and pull his ear if the answer was "Yes", and smooth his hair if it was "No"; happily for all concerned he smoothed his hair; the rumour was false.

The problem of covering the outside processions was much simpler, although it called for a great deal of work on the part of the Ministry of Works and the General Post Office. The camera positions had to be chosen so as to give the most effective coverage to the escorting processions, which were made up of marching units from all corners of the Commonwealth of Nations, as well as to closed-carriage processions carrying members of the Royal Family and distinguished Commonwealth personalities. The route of the great return procession was over five miles long. The final plan was to group cameras outside

Buckingham Palace, outside Westminster Abbey, on the Embankment (for the Queen's procession to the Abbey), and in Hyde Park (for a first and complete view of the two-mile long procession). Twenty-one cameras were used and relays were made to France, Holland and Western Germany—a great technical achievement since all three countries have television standards which differ from those of Great Britain. The experience gained in July, 1952, with the successful relays from Paris proved invaluable experience and suggested that similar methods might be adopted on a more extensive scale.

It was, indeed, a complicated pattern. The vision signals were conveyed by three radio links in tandem from London to Dover. A further radio link carried them to a point on the French coast near Cape Blanc Nez, and as there was every possibility of serious fading because the transmission path was over water, special counter-measures were introduced. From Cape Blanc Nez the signals were conveyed by a further radio link to Mont Cassel in Northern France, and from there to Paris over a radio link provided by the French Post Office. These signals (still, of course, the 405-lines of British television) were fed via a 405-line/819-line converter to the 819-line transmitters at Paris and Lille. The Belgian and Dutch Broadcasting Authorities made arrangements to relay the signals across Belgium to Breda, in Holland, where the conversion from 405-line to the 625-line standard was carried out. The output from the converter at Breda was used to supply the Dutch television stations at Lopik and Eindhoven, and was also fed to Germany by a series of radio links as far as Wuppertal where it joined up with the German television network. By this means it was broadcast by all the television stations in the British zone of Germany—Cologne, Langenberg, Hanover, Hamburg, Berlin, Frankfurt and Weinbeit. Available in Paris was a commentary in French given by a commentator of Radiodiffusion-Télévision Française from the Abbey. French commentators were also stationed at points along the route and they spoke through independent microphones and circuits to a control point established at Broadcasting House and thence by line to Paris. It was not possible to make such elaborate arrangements for commentators from other countries so in Holland and in Germany the commentators gave their commentaries from the pictures they were actually seeing, having visited London shortly before Coronation Day to familiarize

themselves with the precise route of the Coronation and to catch the mood and atmosphere of the people in Britain.

A telc-recording lasting seven hours was also made. A maze of cables festooned the apparatus in the television switching centre; what a glorious example of modern skill and technical ability this whole operation really was. If only John Logie Baird had been alive to witness the amazing development since his Maltese cross at Hastings in 1925. Television's Coronation team, 120 strong, were at their posts by seven in the morning. At 10.15 a.m. precisely, Sylvia Peters appeared on the screen to announce the Coronation Broadcast, to make history, and to establish the roots of television more firmly secured than ever before. Television was here, you could not close your eyes to it; a television set was becoming as much a part of the furniture as the dining-room table.

Who can ever forget the delightful Queen of Tonga, gaily mounting her open carriage during a violent rainstorm, and there she was, some three-quarters of an hour later, still in the open carriage, using her handkerchief to mop away the water, still waving, infectiously happy, whatever the weather. What better advertisement could there be anywhere for the Friendly Isles than this. Her Majesty was crowned at 12.34 p.m. and at nine o'clock that memorable evening all B.B.C. transmitters joined together to bring to the world the voice of the Queen broadcasting from Buckingham Palace to set the seal on this great Coronation Day. It was estimated that some 11,750,000 adults listened to the sound broadcast, and nearly 20,500,000 saw it on television. Another 1,500,000 in Europe saw the television relay.

The Royal Air Force played its part in the Coronation, and operation "Pony Express" was carried out with traditional efficiency. "Pony Express" involved flying tele-recordings across the Atlantic in three Canberras which left London at 1.30 p.m., 3.15 p.m. and 6.26 p.m. Each Canberra took a little over five hours and at 4.15 p.m. local time, a full recording of the B.B.C. Television programme was broadcast by television stations in Ottawa, Toronto, and Montreal. Two of the major United States networks, the N.B.C. and the A.B.C., took the tele-recording via a television link from Montreal to Buffalo. Approximately 80,000 ft of cinematograph film were used for tele-recordings, and the special Coronation number of *Radio Times* sold over

9,000,000 copies—the largest sale of a weekly magazine that had ever been achieved. This then, was the Coronation. It showed that Britain not only led the world in historic pageantry but she was also capable of tremendous scientific achievements.

There were other important stages of television's progress in 1953. Switzerland began television in September; the Swiss were followed a month later by Belgium. In March, the Service of Remembrance for her late Majesty Queen Mary was arranged especially for television from the Queen's Chapel, Marlborough House; the Lying-in-State was televised. Television was relayed for the first time from a ship at sea at the Coronation Review of the Fleet by Her Majesty the Queen from Spithead. High Mass was televised for the first time from the Basilica of St Denis, Paris. In August, B.B.C. Television began to move to White City from Alexandra Palace.

"What's My Line?" has reigned through the years as uncrowned king of all panel games, but there have been many others, such as "Guess My Story" in 1953, with Peter West as chairman. Peter West made his name first as a cricket commentator as a result of an introduction to the B.B.C. by the great C. B. Fry, and he did his first sound cricket commentary as far back as 1947. In March, 1953, his great chance came to conquer new fields when he replaced Jerry Desmonde, because of a last minute illness, on "What's My Line?" This led to "Guess My Story" and a decision to become a free-lance commentator and broadcaster. Peter West, first-class on cricket and rugby football, spread his wings to the realms of entertainment and is now liable to pop up anywhere from "Good Companions" to "Get Ahead"; all of it he handles with great efficiency.

Margaret Lockwood made history in January, 1954, when she became the first chairwoman of a panel game—"Down You Go". The *Daily Herald* correspondent wrote—"I'm all for chairwomen if they look like Maggie; what glamour! tumbling masses of black hair, flashing eyes and teeth, a delightful chuckle, and that famous beauty spot. She wore a devastating off-the-shoulder dress too." The verdict of the *Daily Mirror* at the end of 1954 was that the person who had had far more fun on television than anyone else during the year was Barbara Kelly. So since happiness is infectious, she's the girl who wins hands down as Television Personality of the Year. Her antics in



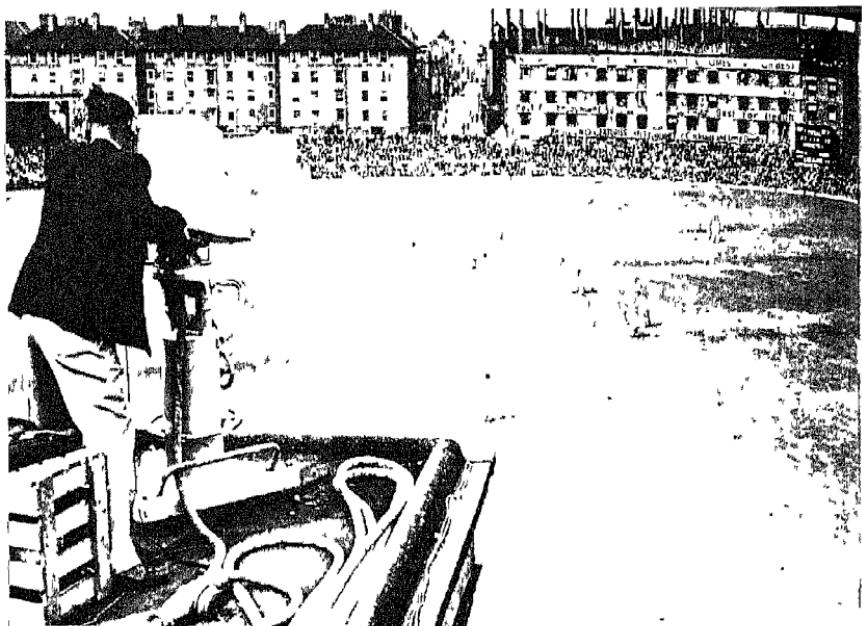
### "STARLIGHT"

Produced for B.B.C. Television on 3 November 1936, one day after the official opening of the service, and starring MABEL DANIELS and BEN LYON, still, in 1961, great favourites with the British public. A few, far-off scenes from *Rio Rita* and *Hell's Angels* (a film in which MR LYON is said to have appeared!)

### "AUTUMN LAUGHTER"

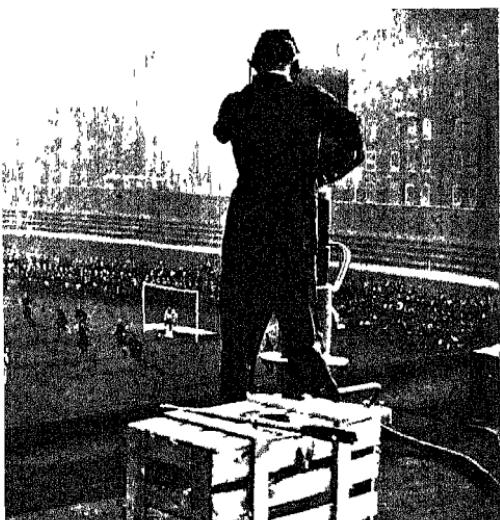
HENRY SHERER'S "Dorchester Hotel Cabaret" in September, 1938. The two gentlemen in the picture are NICK TONG, jun. and DANNY RAYE, presented for television by CECIL MADDEN





#### THE "ORANGE-BOX" OVAL

Two photographs of the television cameras in action at Kennington Oval in 1938. The England v Australia Test Match is in progress in the picture above and the camera-man has for a seat the same orange-box he had used five months earlier for televising a women's international hockey match between England and Wales. Facilities for B.B.C. Television have improved considerably since then on most sporting arenas! So, of course, has the fee for television rights.



“What’s My Line?” every Sunday; her Canadian dry humour is spontaneous and bubbling. She is irrelevant, uninhibited and shameless—she makes a party of it all and throws out more real warmth than any of the others.

The year 1954, like its near predecessors, was one of great strides in world television progress. Italy and Denmark began services; the first outside broadcast from a moving ship at sea—*The Lord Warden*, was carried out; Eurovision completed a link-up of eight countries; the first Television News Service was inaugurated. Sentiment and nostalgia played their parts, too, for in March, “Thank you, Ally Pally” was a programme produced to commemorate the closing down of Alexandra Palace; this is something of a misnomer, in actual fact, since to this day the B.B.C. use Alexandra Palace—the News Bulletins come from the Palace, for one thing, so the old place simply refuses to die, or even like old soldiers, to fade away. “Thank you, Ally Pally” night was an exciting one. The programme not only overran, but extended itself into the next day! The happy revellers could not be induced to join hands for “Auld Lang Syne” until well after midnight, and then only under great pressure from Jasmine Bligh and Leslie Mitchell. Cecil Madden had dug deep into the memory box and produced Helen MacKay, who had sung the original “Here’s Looking at You” in 1936; she was shown singing the number on film and then sang it again in person. Michael Barry, now Head of Television Drama, produced an excerpt from R. C. Sherriff’s masterpiece *Journey’s End*, which was first televised in 1937, and was televised yet again in 1960; here is a play that will stand the test of time for generations to come. A film “Thank you, Ally Pally” showed Eric Robinson stringing a guitar, Nina Mae McKinney, the coloured singer, Sir George Robey, Margot Fonteyn and the Sadler’s Wells Ballet, Lupino Lane in an excerpt from *Me and My Girl*, newsreels of fashions, Wimbledon, politicians, and it ended with the arrival home of Neville Chamberlain from Munich. It also showed the erection of the first transmitter and the building of A and B studios. The party which rounded off the proceedings, or rather, dragged them on, included Arthur Askey, Cyril Fletcher, Boyer and Ravel, Petula Clark, Wmifred Shotter, Joan Miller, Joan Gilbert, Sylvia Peters, Mary Malcolm and McDonald Hobley. One performer asked “When can I do my turn and go home?”;

he was still there three hours afterwards, by which time nothing very much mattered, and whether the viewers were enjoying themselves or had gone to bed, the participants were certainly happy. Eighteen years is a long time. Ally Pally had done a great job.

In April, 1954, Peter Dimmock introduced "Sportsview" for the first time; he was still introducing it in 1961, with the programme a permanent fixture in the home. Clear proof of the philosophy that in life, one man's meat is another man's poison were the two letters published one after the other in the *Radio Times* following a television production of *Carmen*. One correspondent wrote:

I have just been listening to the television production of *Carmen*, and while the memory is still fresh, I must write to congratulate everyone who helped to make such a success of the opera. The whole thing was very cleverly modernized, and I am sure that even the most prejudiced of opera haters must be able to enjoy this.

The second opinion was this:

May I, as an opera-lover since childhood express my concern over television's treatment of Bizet's *Carmen*? The production sadly lacked the warmth and fire with which it should have been presented. Film shots of the street scenes and the bullfight no doubt made an excellent Continental film, but I personally have always found the sight of the actual singers quite painless.

And so it has always been in television entertainment; please one, displease another.

In May, 1954, "In Town Tonight" introduced an American night-club singer with an unusual hobby. What would you imagine an American night-club singer known as The Ball of Fire and earning \$1,500 a week would do in her leisure hours? The lady in question, Miss Beverlee Dennis, played chess! When she returned to America she was to play against a machine which could think eight moves in advance—she hoped to win; her boy friends no doubt found it hard going; who wants a woman eight moves ahead of you all the time!

An historic occasion for a very great man was televised from Westminster Hall on 30 November 1954 when, in recognition of Sir Winston Churchill's incomparable service to the nation, members of both Houses of Parliament met on his eightieth birthday; a portrait

of the Prime Minister, painted by Graham Sutherland, was presented by the Rt. Hon. C. R. Attlee, and a commemorative book containing the signatures of all members of the House of Commons by the Rt. Hon. D. R. Grenfell. Echoing through the minds of so many present on that day were those immortal words "Never, in the field of human conflict, was so much owed by so many to so few"—the Prime Minister's tribute to the gallant warriors who fought out the Battle of Britain against overwhelming odds in the blue skies of England in 1940. Churchill, himself a gallant warrior, a leader of men in adversity second to none, has etched himself deeply into the pages of history as few great men have done before him. His voice, during those dark days, was a lasting symbol of hope to millions of oppressed people in countries overrun by the Nazis; to the British people it portrayed the bulldog spirit of a nation determined, as the great man promised—to fight on the beaches, if needs be.

Churchill, the bulldog—and now—Lenny the Lion, who made his débüt on television. Less than twelve months after making his first television appearance with his fighting Irishman of a dummy, Micky Flynn, Terry Hall, the young ventriloquist from Oldham, appeared in Variety Parade with a new character—Lenny the Lion. Instead of being king of the jungle in all his glory, Lenny was as timid as a mouse, a benign, friendly, and almost simple lion, who could comb his hair, blow his nose and play a musical instrument. It took nearly a year to prepare Lenny for television; some of his constituent parts took a lot of finding; his mane was a problem until his creator hit upon the idea of making it from red fox fur. Poor Lenny—he has to be sprayed with D.D.T. once a month to keep the moths out; what degradation for so distinguished a member of the animal kingdom; as Lenny himself would say—"Don't embarrass me!"

The B.B.C.s whole approach to television underwent a complete overhaul when a competitor came into the field in September, 1955. In 1954-55, the last full year before the introduction of commercial television, revenue expenditure—the cost of programmes, engineering and ancillary services—amounted to £5,043,908. In that year programme costs were £852 per hour; by 1956-57 the costs had risen to £1,538 per hour, an increase of 81 per cent. During 1956-57 the length of television broadcasts was increased by 165 hours—or just over 6

per cent by comparison with the previous year—but the cost of all the services involved rose by £581 per hour (from £2,675 to £3,256) an increase of 21.7 per cent. Approximately two-thirds of this increase was due to the increased cost of programmes.

It is no secret that the arrival of commercial television presented a disconcerting problem to the B.B.C. from a staff point of view alone, especially on the technical side. A very large number of B.B.C. personnel at all levels received generous offers from the opposition; some of these offers meant as much as a 100 per cent increase in salary; it was tempting bait and many accepted it, although in the main most of the offers were only on a short term contract basis. No longer were the people at the top in B.B.C. administration able to view their staff as having no other outlets for their talents; the general structure had to be reshaped. Many of the B.B.C. personnel went into the commercial side and made advertising films; the public, regarding the commercials as something entirely new, seemed to be more interested at first in the presentation of advertisements than the actual programmes. Daily conversations did not centre around a particular play the previous evening; the animated cartoon drawings had a new and pleasing fascination; the chimpanzee's tea party, the little bloke who muttered "One for the pot" and forgot his lines anyway, had brought a breath of something different. While all this was going on the B.B.C. was busy reviewing its staff position; many of those who remained were suitably rewarded for their loyalty. The opportunity now arose for guest people at production level to be used; top producers of the class of Peter Cotes; much new blood was infused into the regular staff, and the battle was on, as indeed, the battle will always be on. Any business worth its salt is watching the movements of a competitor like a cat watching a mouse. Each organization knows perfectly well the viewer ratings of the various programmes; how many viewers have subsequently been torn between "The Army Game" and the master Hancock on a Friday night?—and "Wagon Train" and "Panorama". The arrival of commercial television prompted the B.B.C. to streamline its timings; programmes seldom overran as they used to; they improved presentation; they adopted a more informal attitude—less dressy; they led the field in many programmes which came under an old relic of a title—"The Talks Department"—a net which virtually

embraces the whole of current affairs. A monopoly had ended; it was all for the better.

A master-stroke by one man in the B.B.C. gave an indication of the way the B.B.C. was prepared to accept the challenge. Cecil Madden was given the job of inaugurating afternoon television; the budget, however, permitted precious little to spend on the four till five hour, but being Madden, he was anxious to launch these programmes with a fanfare of trumpets, money or no money; he thus hit upon the simple but ingenious idea of a celebrities tea-party. They would get no fee but were promised tea and cake—hardly a big attraction for top artistes, one would have thought, but show business rallied round Madden to a man. Those who, for some reason or another, were not sent an invitation turned up all the same. Two thousand five hundred people were there, far more than the number of invitations sent out; so great was the crush that many did not even get their tea and cake, but the press did. Madden saw to that, and the number of column inches in the newspapers was worth thousands of pounds in publicity value. Who was there? It would be much easier to list those who were not, but the roving camera eye picked out Terry Thomas, Hermione Gingold, Fabian of the Yard, Bruce Seton who played him on television, Gilbert Harding, Harry Secombe, the Lyons, Elizabeth Allen, Jessie Matthews, Yvonne Arnaud, Jimmy Edwards, Fred Enney, Petula Clark, the Beverley Sisters, and Sabrina; the dancers shuffled round the packed floor of a scene dock at the White City Television Centre to the music of Edmundo Ros and Jack Nathan. Sabrina, apparently, decided on a new dress for the party, it was that sort of occasion, her mother got busy and three hours later produced a high necked gown of French jersey silk. What a party! Harry Secombe openly admitted that he had never seen 'owt like it. Fabulous was the word.

The final months of 1955, with the two services running side by side, included a number of important events as far as the B.B.C. was concerned. The permanent London-Dover Eurovision link was ready—the first programme being transmitted on 15 September; this was the start of regular Eurovision. Her Majesty the Queen and Prince Philip visited Lime Grove in October—a memorable occasion when Her Majesty knighted George Barnes, then Director, on the premises—the

same month that the B.B.C. bought Ealing Film Studios, and the first colour tests were carried out. There were more transmitters, plus the roving eye, and outside broadcast units were now installed in all regions.

In July, 1955, British viewers saw the first performance of America's star television show "This is Your Life". Eamonn Andrews spent an entire day watching over Freddie Mills like a fond parent because Freddie Mills was to be the first unsuspecting subject—or was he? When Freddie was safely installed in the theatre, Eamonn found the cameras focused on himself. He was clearly shaken (as many have since been shaken) when the American host, Ralph Edwards, picked him out of the audience. The life was that of Eamonn Andrews—no one enjoyed it more than Freddie Mills. Boris Karloff (Mr Frankenstein), Bebe Daniels and Ben Lyon who were in the audience must have had some uncomfortable moments until the subject was revealed. Press reaction to the programme was: "If the B.B.C. takes up 'This is Your Life', which is almost certain, the personalities must be chosen from people with a story worth telling." This the B.B.C. has done; it has also preserved the integrity which surrounds the programme from the point of view of a genuine element of surprise. The original subject was not to have been Eamonn Andrews but Stanley Matthews, but the secret, though closely kept, leaked out, the plans were scrapped; Stanley Matthews was cornered at a later date.

When the B.B.C. decided to buy a number of American television comedy shows they backed a winner. "I Married Joan" starring Joan Davis, America's Queen of Comedy, and the Burns and Allen Show, to be followed by Jack Benny. Many have rated George Burns and Gracie Allen as the greatest act in show business; precision timing, superb script-writing, and, in their television show, the magnificent casting of the supporting roles—Harry and Blanche Morton, Harry Von Zell—neighbours that any household might have. What showmanship which introduces brilliant little touches like the occasion when a difficult situation had developed (how could anything else ever happen with Gracie around) and the door bell rang. Burns, in the process of opening the door, suddenly stopped and asked the audience, "What do I do? . . . If I let him in it will only make matters worse—if I don't let him in, the show will run three minutes short!"

For years, says George, in our act, Gracie would say something, I'd repeat it, she'd answer it and get her laugh. From force of habit I repeat everything. In fact, I've been a straight man for so many years that when I went fishing with a fellow one day, and he fell overboard and yelled, "Help", I said "Help". While I waited for him to get his laugh, he drowned! At a dinner party one night someone patted Gracie on the shoulder and said "How's the future President?" It was Eleanor Roosevelt. George's intimate chats to the television audience stems from his qualities as a speaker at stag dinners; it was decided to try out the idea of informality on television, though necessarily with different material from that used for stag do's at the Friar's Club! It worked. George would pause to ask the audience exactly what was going on because they were seeing more of the show than he was. I salute Burns and Allen, humbly, but sincerely, as the greatest double act in show business; now alas, Gracie has retired. A Mr Jack Benny, as Burns refers to him in his book, is another of the American "Greats". How could anyone ever get as mean as that? There was the occasion when Mr Benny was performing on stage and a telegram was delivered to his dressing room. Rochester, accepting it from the cable boy, had no small change; fortunately Mr Benny's pants were hanging up on the peg and he slipped a coin out and tipped the boy. Benny, his act completed, began to dress; as he lifted his pants down off the peg he held them in his hands for a moment or two like a customer who feels he has been given short-weight for a pound of sugar, and exclaimed "Who's had a quarter out of here?" He once sat all day beside a fountain in Rome until Mary Livingstone told him that "Three coins in a fountain" was only the name of a song! In April, 1956, the B.B.C. bought seventeen Benny films and immediately began negotiations for another batch; a year later fifty top B.B.C. executives watched a sneak pre-view of an American television film, and Kenneth Adam, programme controller, watched their reactions to it; their smiles and bursts of laughter convinced him of the assured popularity of the show in England and that clinched the deal. The film was one of a series called "You'll get Rich" and starred an artiste almost unknown this side of the Atlantic, his name was Phil Silvers. It had been described as America's top half-hour show, and had won for Silvers the American television equivalent of Hollywood's Oscar. The show revolved around

a barracks, Master Sergeant Ernie Bilko (Silvers) and his dreadful platoon of National Service G.I.s—a kind of Fred Karno's Army. One thing about Ernie Bilko, you love him or loathe him, there are no half-measurers—too noisy, some say, brilliantly scripted and acted say others. For my part, I love Bilko, and Colonel Hall (my secretary's No. 1 pin up next to Robert Mitchum), and Ritzig and Doberman. The Arsenal footballers, incidentally, used the names from this show amongst each other. David Herd was Dwayne, and players could actually be heard using "Dwayne" on the field during a match when calling to Herd for the ball. Bilko is a remarkable man but there is a limit to human endurance as Phil Silvers found when he was once asked to a George Burns party and George promised faithfully that he would not be called upon to do a turn. George did one himself that went on for ever. Bilko couldn't stand it and asked "Can I go on, now?"—he went on!

In 1955 an honest to goodness ordinary "copper" set out to tread a beat; he still treads that same beat and is likely to continue to do so, God willing, for many a day yet. The name is "Dixon of Dock Green", a television programme which in 1959 celebrated its 100th performance; a birthday cake was cut in the presence of the five old hands—Ted Willis, the creator and script-writer, Jack Warner (George Dixon), Arthur Rigby (Sergeant Flint), Peter Byrne (Andy Crawford) and Douglas Moodie, the versatile producer, who is also responsible for "Whack-O". The happy partnerships of Moira Mannion as Sergeant Grace Millard and Jeanette Hutchinson as Mary Crawford, Dixon's daughter, were established later. Ted Willis had created the part of Dixon for the film *The Blue Lamp*, basing him on a real policeman who has since retired. Before each television series—the seventh began in 1960—Ted Willis meets the Public Relations Officer at Scotland Yard who outlines the main points they would like put over. Can you put in a bit about locking your car when you leave it, don't forget to lock the kitchen if you are in another room watching television.

Is Ted Willis likely to run out of material?—emphatically "No". When he did once feel the need for a "new look" to the series he advertised in two police papers; 1,200 replies poured in; one policeman alone was able to supply the material for eight programmes. Each

story is based on fact and particular care is paid to the type of crime portrayed because so many children watch and love Dixon. Sometimes a child will write and ask George to tick his little brother off because "He will take more notice of you than he will of his Dad!"

Just as Phil Silvers has become "Bilko" to the mass television audiences of America, Jack Warner has become plain "Dixon" in Britain. Jack Warner, who as Warner and Darnell had begun sound broadcasting in 1927, appeared on television in 1936, and was a household name to the Forces of the world in World War II for his part in Garrison Theatre. Do you remember "Mind my Bike", "Little Gel", and "A bung up of rat-holes"? Jack Warner might easily have played Doolittle in *My Fair Lady*; instead he now has his own uniform and boots—relics from *The Blue Lamp*. That uniform is the same as worn by real policemen except that the "O" Division indicated on the shoulder doesn't exist. Jack, whose real name is Waters, took another name because his sisters, Elsie and Doris, had preceded him in making their name in show business. They made a hit as a double act, so Jack began in the same way with Jeff Darnell, a schoolmaster, who alas, later returned to his schoolmastering despite undoubted talent as a song-writer, but Jack Warner has never forgotten him, and when Dixon was created for the television screen, Jeff Darnell was asked to write the signature tune. Jack Warner went his own way; his experience of having worked in France fitted him out for his now famous impression of Maurice Chevalier; his ability to sing French songs won him a place in "Music for You"; he has now made thirty-five films. Yet at the beginning of the war the outlook was bleak until one day he stopped his car outside a post office in Richmond and sent a telegram to the bookings manager of the B.B.C. "Any chance for Me—Jack Warner." The result was two appearances for 10 guineas, then two more, two more, two more, and so on. Then a meeting with Charles Shadwell who was looking for a cockney soldier to crack a few gags in Garrison Theatre. Jack Warner, had he known it then, was made. Within six months he was top of the bill at the Palladium. He still raises his hat to that post office in Richmond whenever he passes it!

Now, he lives the role of Dixon. "I'm scared stiff", he says, "of driving my car. Supposing I was pinched for exceeding the speed

limit or worse still for dangerous driving. The sincerity of the show would take a knock." Frequently members of the cast are stopped in the street by complete strangers who say "My husband is a policeman, you are doing a wonderful job for the likes of him." An old lady once asked a police constable the way to Dock Green, she thought it would be nice to meet all those good people. Once a letter addressed George Dixon, England, was safely delivered.

The show's greatest moment came when it was mentioned in the House of Commons. It was stated that the police could trace an increase in recruitment due to "Dixon of Dock Green". The show is proud of mention in Hansard.

In a way, perhaps, "Dixon of Dock Green" is the English version of a "Western", evil is never allowed to triumph, and although there are no galloping hooves, incessant gun duels and fist brawls, the bad man is there and he always pays the inevitable price for his sins. Dixon has no Sheriff's badge; the uniform of the British Police Force, however, is the symbol of justice. By 1960, an audience of something like 11,000,000 were watching "Dixon of Dock Green" on a Saturday night. Ted Willis certainly started something when he created Dixon for *The Blue Lamp*. Jack Warner seems to have been tailor-made for the part, and what a pleasure it is working with him. A happy team is once again the formula for success.

## CHAPTER VI: PROGRESS ON ALL FRONTS

*The dawn of 1956 begins the challenge . . . B.B.C. Television now feeding 97 per cent of population . . . submarine transmission . . . new social effects . . . the funeral of Pope Pius and Coronation of new Pope . . . a patron saint of Television . . . Election Night . . . the wedding of Princess Margaret . . . new Television Centre opens.*

THE dawn of 1956 saw Independent Television coming through its inevitable teething troubles and offering a challenge to the B.B.C. although still only in a limited degree because of restricted coverage. An important executive change took place in the Corporation's affairs when Sir George Barnes, the Director of Television, left the B.B.C. to become Principal of the University College of North Staffordshire. His death in September, 1960, was a sad blow to his countless friends; his place in television history is assured. Sir George was succeeded as Director by Mr Gerald Beadle; this appointment was announced on 27 April. Mr Beadle had joined the B.B.C. as an announcer and programme administrator in 1923. A year later he went to South Africa as Director of the newly erected Durban Station, but returned home in 1926 to become Station Director of Belfast. He was Director of Staff Training in 1936 and was responsible for the formation of the staff training school. Mr Beadle said on his appointment that the biggest problems before him was a second television programme, and television in colour. He felt that a second B.B.C. television programme was absolutely necessary if a really comprehensive service was to be offered to the public.

It has been the view of the Television service since the end of the war that the requirements of the charter could not be satisfactorily fulfilled in television through the operation of a single programme. In February, 1956, however, the Postmaster-General announced that

the Government had decided to defer consideration of the additional television programme for two years owing to its desire to curb capital expenditure. In addition, the Government felt that delay would clarify the implications of current technical developments, including the introduction of colour television.

The B.B.C. was intensely interested in the development of colour and had begun a series of experimental transmissions in October, 1955, from the London Television Station. The research continues. B.B.C. viewing time was increased in 1956 to fifty hours a week, but with one programme it was still a question of too many ideas chasing too few spaces in the programmes. More and more use was made of the feature film, many of them masterpieces of days gone by, thus providing an opportunity to see old favourites again like Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers, Charles Laughton, Jane Russell, and Barbara Stanwyck. These old films certainly tickled the fancies of many of the viewers, but are feature films on television likely to sow seeds of discontent in relation to normal television programmes? The feature film might have taken a whole year to make; there will have been endless re-takes so as to ensure absolute perfection, a technique not available in the medium of live television except, of course, when the programme is recorded. These films, too, have star-studded casts which would be outside the compass of a normal television budget, and technically, one always feels that scenes shot for large-size cinema screens are altogether out of perspective on television. But there it is, there is nothing quite like nostalgia, nothing like recalling old times, as Anthony Hancock and Sidney James showed us one evening when Hancock laid on a special party for his boozy and high-spirited Army chums whom he had not seen for fifteen years!

By 1956, the B.B.C. had fourteen transmitters operating, feeding 97 per cent of the population. Part of the remaining 3 per cent will be provided with a service in due course; the remainder, because of geographical contours and the attendant expense, may never be able to receive television programmes, but it will be a tiny fraction of the whole country. It was in 1956 that the Crystal Palace site was brought into service—a mere stone's throw from where Baird had worked. In 1961 twenty-five transmitters are serving 98.8 per cent.

Henry Sherek, impresario, that great man of the theatre, speaking

in March, 1956, referred to the advantageous effect that television has had on playwrights. "It is a sign of the times," he said, "that the B.B.C. is doing more to encourage new playwrights than anyone since Shakespeare's day. The television services need about 300 original works in a year, including serials and adaptions from books. The West End theatres can get along for a whole year on thirty or forty."

A drama event of the year was the appearance on B.B.C. television of Eartha Kitt, the fabulous American artiste who was reputed to earn £85,000 a year. Her first dramatic role in Britain was that of a condemned murderer in a thirty-minute play *The Valiant*. Her performance was expected to net her about £85. "There are some things in life which you do not do for money," Miss Kitt told an interviewer, "and this is one of them!" Asked if she aimed to break off cabaret and go in for the legitimate theatre she replied, "I suppose if I went into the theatre my living would be fairly comfortable, but not as comfortable as it is now. I do think my earnings at the moment are ridiculously high for anyone my age and I don't think anyone my age should make that money." Eartha Kitt was then 27.

She was not happy about the critic's reception of her role in *The Valiant* and told the B.B.C. that she would be willing to appear again. Miss Kitt suggested that the play should be *Miss Patterson*, in which she played on Broadway, and she wanted to bring the cast over from America. It was unlikely, however, that permits would be granted; the main concern was to get a permit to allow Eartha to stay. Her role this time was one of a 15 year old coloured girl who wants to be a real white woman, like her mother's employer, Miss Patterson. This time the press said: "Although Broadway gave Eartha Kitt her first big chance as an actress in the play *Miss Patterson*, she had to come to London and face the B.B.C. cameras to convey the full flavour of her remarkable talent. The television close-ups in last night's version allowed the much bigger than Broadway television audience to follow the will o' the wisp thoughts of teenage Teddy Hicks, impatient with her dull poverty stricken home in the Deep South. Eartha Kitt's last moments on the screen were a brilliant silent demonstration of how a girl grows up and learns the first great adult lesson that life goes on whatever your dreams may be."

It was in 1956 that 1,000,000 viewers saw Ulanova. The great

ballerina's anxiety was whether or not Prince Charles would be watching her performance. She had asked Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother, if he could stay up and watch, and five minutes before the Bolshoi went on the air, Ulanova remarked "I don't know if he is watching, but I hope so." Milton Shuman, writing in the *Evening Standard*, described Ulanova's triumph in the following tribute to her. "The appearance of Ulanova in an extract from *Swan Lake* on the B.B.C. reassured me that television could bring wondrous beauty and limpid grace to millions who otherwise would never experience it."

Sir Ian Jacob, Director-General, speaking at a dinner of the British Jewellers Association in Birmingham in January, 1956, outlined the B.B.C.'s approach to television when he said:

Entertainment and relaxation are valuable—indeed essential—to a hard-working community. But I do not believe we should be making a proper use of the great potentialities if we allowed our service to be used with no higher aim in view. The real future of television lies in opening to everyone the door on the living world, so that they can participate in the thoughts and actions, the events and the beauties of all peoples and lands. The B.B.C. intends to realize these possibilities to the full, and to show enterprise and imagination in the interest of the community we serve. We shall continue to provide programmes of a wide variety to suit all tastes and of the highest standard that we can achieve.

Two notable first transmissions took place in 1956—the first from an ocean liner at sea—the *Queen Elizabeth*, and the other even more remarkable and praiseworthy—the first relay from a submerged submarine; both were televised in June. The *Sunday Dispatch* making reference to the submarine transmission said:

Saturday Night Out was Saturday Night Under—what an extraordinary and historic broadcast it was. Technical difficulties added to a rough sea were triumphantly overcome to present the story of the Royal Navy's submarine *Tapir* attacking the fast frigate, *Grenville*, in the Channel. Cameras on submarine and frigate showed every phase of the attack more vividly than any film. Even Richard Dimbleby's massive frame was rocked alike by the heavy waters and the crash of mortars in the frigate's counter-attack. It was a superb piece of TV reporting which dwarfed the rest of the night's offerings.

A number of people had every reason to be pleased with the B.B.C. when the Two Thousand Guineas was televised for the first time, as the cameras gave hundreds of viewers a tip for 50-1 Gilles de Retz, the longest priced winner of the race this century. When the cameras were focused on the starting gate they pin-pointed jockey, Frank Barlow, standing by the horse. "Look, Barlow is resting his horse on this hot day"—said a commentator—"he's taking the weight off the horse's back for as long as possible." That was the hint which made many viewers reach for the telephone beside them to back this little fancied horse. Barlow said after the race that when the horses arrived at the starting post the starter told them that they were three minutes too early, so he decided to dismount and rest his horse; no other jockey bothered to do so. Did the televising of this classic make much difference to the bookmakers? At the Park Lane headquarters of bookmaker William Hill an augmented telephone staff of 225 operators were taking bets at the rate of 1,200 a minute!

The first television station in the Middle East was opened at Baghdad in May by King Feisal on his twenty-first birthday. It was bought from Britain at a cost of £65,000 and the B.B.C. supplied newsreels.

A true drama of the sea was enacted before the television cameras when the Dover lifeboat was returning to harbour after relaying television pictures of the South Goodwins light vessel earlier in the afternoon. Suddenly, a distress signal was received from a fishing boat. As there was a full television and sound unit aboard the lifeboat the B.B.C. made an on the spot decision to take full advantage of it and televise the rescue. Immediately after the Sunday afternoon "Sports Round-Up", viewers went back to the lifeboat and Raymond Baxter explained the plight of the vessel in distress; it was unmanageable and was being swept mercilessly against the rocks. The coxswain of the lifeboat spoke to viewers to point out the dangers as a line was thrown to the fishermen. A group of men in sou'westers hauled the rope aboard and the picture faded out when the vessel had been taken in tow. Still more seamen had reason to be indebted to the gallant lifeboatmen of Britain who patrol our shores and go down to the sea in ships.

Thriller serials by Francis Durbridge have always commanded a high viewing audience. *My Friend Charles* in March, 1956, was one of them starring Stephen Murray, who starred again months later

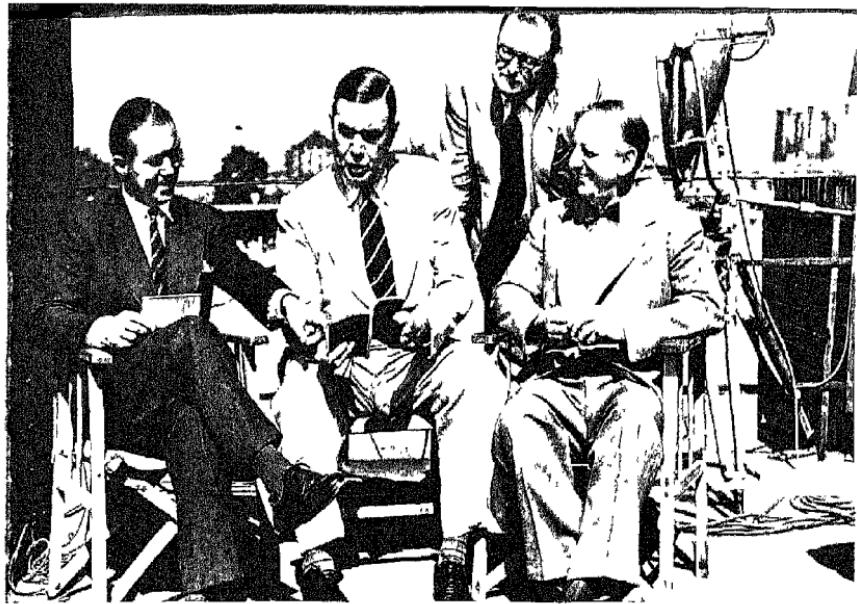
with Donald Pleasence in an even bigger Durbridge success—*The Scarf*. The introductory music to *The Scarf* fascinated many people into writing to the B.B.C. asking for the title of the music. It was "Girl from Corsica". The *Radio Times* at this time carried a strangely unfamiliar imprint: "Printed in France by Société Cofosco, 28, rue d'Assas, Paris." An immense operation had to be put into force when a printing dispute disrupted magazine printing in this country.

Wednesday, 18 April, was a day of crowded major events. The wedding of His Sovereign Highness Prince Rainier III, Sovereign Prince of Monaco, to Miss Grace Kelly; the commentators for this memorable piece of television were Richard Dimbleby and Audrey Russell. B.B.C. television cameras were at Victoria Station for the arrival of the Soviet leaders, Marshal Bulganin and Mr Kruschev, and in the evening, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Rt. Hon. Harold Macmillan, spoke for the Government on the Budget.

David Nixon had come along with his magic which never failed to bring a gasp of astonishment; perhaps his greatest piece of magical skill was the appearance of his little live figures; a superb trick of the camera and the magician.

On 18 February 1957 "Tonight" was born—a programme which Cliff Michelmore has made his own. " 'Tonight' is back. On Monday evening the familiar bouncy tune will invite you to look around with Cliff Michelmore and his team at the topical, the unexpected, the sad, the controversial, the amusing, the important, the insignificant, the provocative, and even the sentimental issues of the day. Such is the range of the programme that no string of adjectives will suffice to make a boundary to its activities. And such is the vitality, the imagination, the industry and the technical skill of all who work to put it on the air for five days of every week that there is literally no subject that can confidently be dismissed as being not suitable."

These words were written in the *Radio Times* in August, 1960, when "Tonight", which began as a stop-gap to fill a period when previously there had been no transmission, had developed into a magazine programme of quite extraordinary proportions. "To-Night" happened because the Commercial companies wanted to fill the gap between 6 and 7 p.m.; this was agreed. In a way, perhaps, it is the modern "Picture Page"; streamlined, maybe, but similar in character; just



A television cricket team photographed in 1955 on the roof of the Oval and still going strong in 1961. PETER WEST, "JIM" SWANTON, ROY WEBB, prince of statisticians, and BRIAN JOHNSTON

The great Arsenal side of 1937 show keen interest in the television camera on their ground at Highbury. The three players facing the photographer are EDDIE HAPGOOD, HIRSH ROBERTS and JOE HULME





ERIC WILD AND HIS TEA TIMERS, DECEMBER, 1936  
A combination which specialized in a soft rhythmic style of playing. Strumming away contentedly on the guitar in this picture is ERIC ROBINSON.

#### FIRST NIGHT OF THE PROMS

On 25 July 1939, the B.B.C. Television cameras were at the Royal Albert Hall for the first part of the opening concert of the sixty-fifth season of the "Henry Wood Promenade Concerts". SIR MALCOLM SARGENT conducts the B.B.C. Symphony Orchestra. NORMA PROCTER (contralto) was the soloist in ELGAR's "Sea Pictures".



as Madden and his scouts had scoured every piece of news, so indeed, do the "Tonight" team. The full contents of the programme often remain undetermined until late in the afternoon before transmission. Once, when the Motor Show was on and London's traffic was in a state of chaos, "Tonight" went on the air without one single guest in the studio. They arrived in dribs and drabs and were rushed straight on. Cliff Michelmore's success is often attributed to the fact that he appears so relaxed. This is not merely a state of mind; only an artiste can look thoroughly relaxed, and goodness alone knows this is a programme where many a situation is enough to turn blonde hair to grey, or the most relaxed nerves into mincemeat. Editor Donald Baverstock has brought the programme through the years from its tentative airing to be part and parcel of British television. Derek Hart, Alan Whicker, Fyfe Robertson, John Morgan, Trevor Philpott and Polly Elwes have created an unparalleled standard in television news reporting, and Michelmore smiles inscrutably on as if his life moves as smoothly for him as the rippling water on one of the reaches of the Thames. Viewers cannot see him poring over newspapers and magazines as soon as his eyes are opened in the morning. He arrives in his office about noon; he is watching film between two and three. A rough running order is formulated usually between three and four. He meets the guests, provided they have turned up, about half past six and after the show the next "Tonight" is tomorrow—five times a week and watched by 7,000,000 viewers daily. It is quite a milestone—February, 1957.

The Duke of Edinburgh established himself as a television personality with two programmes in 1957. "Round the World in Forty Minutes" in May, and "The Restless Sphere" in June, the story of the International Geophysical Year. Tele-recordings were sent to Australia, Canada, America, Russia, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, the Netherlands, Switzerland and Italy. In October, Her Majesty the Queen was first seen broadcasting specially for television in a tele-recording of her address to the people of Canada, and at Christmas, for the first time, her annual message to the Commonwealth was televised as it was heard simultaneously on sound.

In March, 1957, Gerald Beadle, Director of B.B.C. Television, wrote an analysis of the existing state of the poll in the keen rivalry

between the B.B.C. and Independent Television, which had then been in progress for nearly eighteen months. Mr Beadle referred to a widely publicised impression that more people were watching commercial television than B.B.C. The explanation was quite simple. About one-fifth of the homes of Britain were, at the end of 1956, equipped to receive both programmes. Commercial television was viewed 62 per cent of the time in one-fifth of the homes. The B.B.C. Service, therefore, entertained not one-fifth, but one-half the homes of Britain; in terms of viewers the top thirty-nine were all B.B.C. programmes. Fortieth place was occupied by "Sunday Night at the London Palladium". On 4 February, "Panorama" had an audience of 11,250,000 people. Commercial television was, of course, expanding all the time at a greater pace than the B.B.C. simply because little children grow quicker than big ones; there was more room to expand in a service only eighteen months old. Presumably, as the years go by the gap will narrow so much that one day the race may be neck and neck; this vigorous competition can do nothing but good to the parties concerned.

The B.B.C. introduced "Portraits of Power" in April, four programmes illustrating the nature of the power wielded in their separate and differing ways by Hitler, Gandhi, Roosevelt and Stalin. The first subject was Adolf Hitler; the programme was based on authentic records, on film from captured and official archives, and included evidence from Alan Bullock, Hugh Trevor-Roper and Ernst Hanfstaengl. These four programmes had a wide impact on the viewing audience.

Public opinion on television still varied considerably as public opinion on any subject always will. Lord Beveridge speaking in the House said he would never have a television set even as a gift. Although he did not own a set he had watched one whilst convalescing in a Bournemouth hotel; he had noted that although there were one or two good programmes the main thing he and his wife had seen was hideous shouting by hideous people. On the other hand, television had been voted as the greatest achievement of the twentieth century by a panel of guest speakers at the Young Ulster Society. One research organization had stated that in homes receiving both television services more than 1,000,000 children under the age of 16 were viewing

between seven and nine o'clock; 500,000 between nine and ten, and 250,000 between ten and eleven. Mr Norman Collins, formerly a B.B.C. executive and now on the other side of the fence, made a bold prophecy in March, 1957. It was that by the autumn of 1958 more I.T.A. programmes would be viewed by more people than would be the case with the B.B.C. By 1962, the B.B.C. charter and licence would have ground itself to a standstill!

The effect of television on the cinema was the focus of a survey which published its findings in January, 1957. In America, from 1946-8, the attendances were 90,000,000 a week; with the growth of population it should have reached 120,000,000 a week. Instead attendances fluctuated between 30,000,000 and 50,000,000. Figures for the annual attendances in Britain were:

1951—1,365,000,000	1954—1,276,000,000
1956 (probably) 1,000,000,000	1960 (estimated) 900,000,000

Cinemas all over the country were closing down whilst television was expanding on all fronts and in all countries. But was it altogether television, were there not many other factors?

Television had not noticeably affected the congregations at Sunday church services, but it was apparently turning the worshippers into clock-watchers. One Methodist minister said that one dare not go over the usual time for finishing the evening service or else there is an exodus during the last hymn to make sure of being home for the start of the play. The congregation hurried from the church as soon as the service was over even if there was a meeting afterwards.

The Brewers Society announced the news that people were beginning to drift back to the "locals". The first craze of television was wearing off a little. Between January and November, 1954, the country knocked back 784,332,000 gallons. During the same period of 1956 the consumption was 801,468,000 gallons, a ration per head of seventeen gallons a year for every person in Britain.

Television was blamed, however, for what was alleged to be damaging effects to various sections of the community. The Worcestershire Health Executive Council said that 160 people a day had asked for spectacles compared with 130 a day in the spring of the past five years. When *Picture Post* ceased publication on 1 June 1957 Sir Edward

Hulton gave as the principal reason for its closure the fact that television was doing so much better the work which *Picture Post* had pioneered. Mr J. P. M. Millar, a trade union official, described the television screen as a one-eyed monster that had taken possession of a large proportion of homes and was devouring time previously available for trade union and labour activities. A 10 ft poster was erected at Bilston Town Hall urging the public to ration their tele-viewing. The poster depicted a pair of bloodshot eyes, each framed by television screens. The poster was the idea of Dr D. A. Smythe, medical officer, who explained that school nurses had reported an increasing number of sore eyes. Investigation showed that children watched television for an average of four hours a night—far too much, even for adults. And what of the entertainers who provided light entertainment, what was their view of television? Bing Crosby remarked that anybody who allowed himself to appear on television once a week is out of his mind if he wanted to keep on working. Crosby believed that even a much-loved star could become so familiar to the public that they might lose interest. The small screen is a monster which can wreck a career as quickly as it can create a star. In television, Crosby said, “You are only as good as your last show!” If once a year was good enough for Victor Borge—then once a week is too much for most people. Borge, with his once a year formula, was the most successful television performer of all.

There was one amusing case of dog taking man for a walk when members of an archery club at Burton-on-Trent equipped their arrows with whistles because spectators who had watched Robin Hood on television expected to hear arrows whistle. *Punch* commented—“This is only the beginning of the movement to make real life toe the line and come up to telexpectations.”

“What’s My Line?” had its usual knocking about from the critics during 1957, but emerged triumphant as the greenest evergreen of them all. In January it was getting ready for its 200th performance. In February the press said the show was in a shallow dive of declining popularity. Kenneth Bailey expressed this view writing in the *People* “Tonight, at eight sharp, ‘What’s My Line?’ goes on trial for its life—at least as far as I am concerned. The trial will last eight weeks when the present run ends. If it does not account itself well I submit the game should be killed.” Its greatness came from two happily co-operating

teams. First—Jerry Desmonde, Lady Barnett, Elizabeth Allen and Gilbert Harding. Second—David Nixon, Lady Barnett, Barbara Kelly and Gilbert Harding. In September, 1957, the critics said that it was old stuff played out, a dead duck, mere exhibitionism, snooty, snobbish, bad mannered, boring and dull. It came back for the sixth year when the rival channels were greater than ever in terms of competition. Who would choose to fight back with a dead duck? "What's My Line?" was still at the top of the tree; a hardy annual which came into full flower and bloomed for an amazing length of time in each year. Why, just why has it proved so popular? In the view of Isobel Barnett, an accomplished and delightful "What's My Liner?", the reason is threefold. First, because other people's jobs are always interesting. Secondly, it is a programme to be enjoyed by all ages, and thirdly, because it appeals to all classes of the community.

Eric Maschwitz, the new Head of B.B.C. Television Light Entertainment, gave an indication of the fast moving nature of television show business when he suggested that some old faces would disappear, and others would be seen less. The medium needs youth and new talent. We want attractive young people or new old people. "Skiffle", "Rock and Roll", and other modern music would not last for ever, we must get back to ballad music. Eric Maschwitz had boosted sound radio when it was in the doldrums in the 1930s. He introduced series like "In Town Tonight", stars like Jean Sablon and Hildegarde. He introduced into the theatre Jeannie Carson, Bill Fraser, Judy Campbell, Zoe Gail, and Julie Andrews, and he wrote the words for "A Nightingale Sang in Berkeley Square", "These Foolish Things" and "Room 504".

At a ceremony in March, 1958, when Jimmy Edwards was installed as the first Rector of St Luke's College, Exeter, he made this observation, "I cannot think why all the best brains of our country should have devoted their time to inventing television. It means that we are becoming a nation of short-sighted, hunch-backed troglodytes. The only good thing about it is that it presents a means of employment for me." Neither the Headmaster, Pettigrew, Taplow nor any of the Governors of Chislebury School could spell troglodytes, nor indeed, did any of them know what it meant, but it was good sort of stuff from a prestige point of view and was likely to induce a few more

unsuspecting parents to contribute their fees to the Headmaster's kitty or barrel! (A troglodyte is described in the *Oxford Dictionary* as being a primitive cave-dweller.)

There was a fuss when television sets were installed in the lounges of the twenty-eight British Transport Commission hotels. They were to receive only B.B.C. programmes. Why not the other channels? The Commission stated that experience had shown that where there is a choice, there is disagreement. We don't want this to happen in our hotels. Private sets in the hotels were to receive both channels.

In 1958 a private firm in Luton designed a house in which the television screens were visible wherever you were. Even the kitchen was so sited that those washing-up would not miss a moment of the show. A remote control system allowing changes of programmes without leaving the sink was optional. An Englishman's home was always more than his castle. It was a refuge from the outside world. These old-fashioned notions would now, it seemed, have to be revised. The home would eventually become a wide-range of channels and a room with a view would become a room with good viewing.

In March, 1958, all 5 ft 1 in of Charlie Drake began a new weekly series entitled "Drake's Progress"; the little man's progress had been rapid; he had virtually become a television star in twelve months; he had proved that slapstick was still good business as long as it is handled with individuality; this Charlie Drake does. The little man from Weybridge, England, can get himself entangled with apache dancers, knocked about by American gangsters—always getting trampled on; always missing the girl, and never getting further than believing that every maiden he meets would look lovely in white. "Does that mean we are engaged?" he will say; it never does. This Drake has an armada of followers.

The television series with the longest run in Britain and drawing more than 8,000,000 regular viewers from schoolgirls to old age pensioners completed its tenth season in April. Under the direction of Victor Silvester, silver-haired immaculate maestro of strict tempo dancing, the B.B.C. "Dancing Club" just went on and on riding the crest of a wave of permanent popularity. So indeed, did the Max Jaffa Trio—Jaffa, Kilbey, Byfield. The appreciation figures showed unmistakably that their music left Rock and Roll standing with never

an angry letter. Why? Because, like Perry Como, the relaxing Mr "C", they resolutely turned away from extreme popular trends. They refused to be stampeded by crazes. Instead, the Jaffa trio served the mixture as before, offering light classics superbly played with quiet dignity. They achieved their fame on television by playing pieces such as Schubert's "Serenade", Handel's "Largo" and Puccini's "One Fine Day", none of these were ever in the top ten! Do they spend a lot of time in rehearsal? "Heavens, no," says Jaffa, "we have been together so long that we each know instinctively what we are all going to do."

Jack Payne, the Grand Old Young Man of B.B.C. dance music, sound and television, took up the baton again in July, 1958, a baton he had laid down twenty years previously. The old master went on television to tackle anything from "Red Sails in the Sunset" to a movement of the Tchaikovsky Violin concerto. The *Daily Express* rose in acclamation, "Jack Payne's new Show, 'Words and Music', indicates to the naturally sceptical that popular music need not always appear to be written and performed by dedicated halfwits. I like the aggressive controversial streak in Payne which still refuses to allow the easy route to rowdy popularity. He demands standards in his music and its performance. Payne refuses to have his judgement swamped by any latest craze. It is refreshing in any programme which discusses discs these days to find a musician in the house."

The more serious programme, "Monitor", was first broadcast in 1958. It was described as the Panorama of the Arts. "Monitor", "Panorama", "Tonight", and the "News", was the rough equivalent for the B.B.C. of a serious Sunday newspaper.

Eurovision was responsible for two major broadcasts of everlasting memory in October and November, 1958. First, on 13 October, was the televising of the funeral of Pope Pius; it was a stirring and moving transmission. The ranks and mass of robed figures, tiny against the huge magnificent proportions of pillars, the face of the dead Pope seen in close-up as the bier was carried past the camera; the ceaseless rolling wave of sound—all these created a tremendous impression of power. So clear were the pictures that it was even possible to see the dovetailed joints in the coffin. Father Angellus Andrew and Richard Dimbleby described the occasion for British television. Dimbleby spoke of the warm October sunshine as Rome mourned the passing of one who will

surely rank among the greatest of her sons. On 4 November the Coronation of Pope John was televised. The cameras inside the great Basilica of St Peter's presented momentous views of the Pope and his entourage at all stages of the long ceremonial. But above all they brought the Pope as a human being as well as the spiritual head of the Roman Catholic faith into the homes of millions of people throughout Europe. They showed his mannerisms and brief moments of uncertainty, as he turned to his advisers as if unsure momentarily of his own part in the next stage in the complicated ritual. Some of the shots recalled similar scenes to those painted by generations of great masters. This television transmission brought out the full significance of an event which otherwise would have remained for many a remote traditional ceremony. It wiped out frontiers and boundaries and more than hinted at the tremendous potentiality which the medium of television has for creating better and deeper international understanding.

The new Pope thanked television, film and radio organizations for the dignity with which they covered the death of Pope Pius, the Conclave and his Coronation. The letter mentioned the spirit of devotion and duty with which they broadcast programmes that stirred the world on the occasion of the recent most important events of the Church.

On New Year's Eve, 1958, the *Daily Mail* threw a bouquet in the direction of the B.B.C. It said:

While resisting the seasonal temptation to draw up an honours list, I am happy to put on record the fact that during 1958 the B.B.C. Film Department alone made more than 40 complete films. Most of them were good ones and a few of them were brilliant. You might like to test your memory on this selection. "The Inheritors" (Quite the best series of the year), "Living with Danger", "Does class Matter", "Portraits of Power", "Hellenic Cruise" (Sir Mortimer Wheeler as mate), "A Sculptor's Landscape", "Second Enquiry", "On Call to the Nation". The Zoo Quest team are at present in Paraguay and I shall be surprised if Charles Lagus's pictures turn out to be anything less than excellent. John Schlesinger, though he doesn't actually press the button, is coming up fast with his strongly imaginative film essays for Monitor.

Every month in 1958 about 500,000 ft of film was handled by

the B.B.C.s film department. Camera-men undertook foreign assignments from Cape Town to Stockholm, and from Roscoff to New Guinea. There was enough film in the film library to stretch from London to Bangkok.

In February, 1959, the Pope proclaimed St Clare a patron saint for television. St Clare was a thirteenth-century Nun who prayed on her convent sick-bed that she could "see" a Christmas Eve Church Service being held many miles away. Her prayer was answered and she saw a vision of the service. The Pope saw in this miracle a parallel with the modern miracle of television. St Clare of Assisi lived from 1194-1253. The Abbot of Downside, the Rt. Rev. Christopher Butler, who had appeared many times on television, welcomed the Pope's thought for television. He said: "This is a recognition by the Pope of the large part television plays in our lives. Neither the cinema, opera, ballet or the theatre has a Saint of its own."

Highlights of B.B.C. television in 1959 included the first use of transatlantic telephone cable to transmit television films; an invention by the B.B.C. engineering division which is quite unique and enables news-films to be sent across the Atlantic in certain conditions. It was first used when the Queen opened the St Lawrence Seaway. The new Post Office cross-Channel radio links between Tolsford Hill, near Folkestone, and Fiennes, near Calais, operated for the first time in a Eurovision link-up; President Eisenhower and the British Prime Minister appeared together on British television; the first picture of the reverse side of the moon, taken by Russian Lunik III, was shown on television in "The Sky at Night"; the B.B.C. covered the General Election—a programme in which Richard Dimbleby surpassed himself in endurance and immaculate efficiency over a long and trying period; he was there as everyone went to bed in the early hours; he was still there as viewers were taking late breakfasts. No less than thirty-seven cameras were used. On New Year's Eve, Sir Ian Jacob resigned as Director-General. The personality of 1958? Well, as the *Daily Mail* observed, "Now there can be no doubt. Cliff Michelmore, 37, the calm unflurried compere of the B.B.C. show 'Tonight' has been named the Television personality (male) for the second time." First to nominate him was the Guild of Television Producers and Directors. Now—three months later in March, 1959, he gets the top

vote again, this time from television's critics and writers. The B.B.C.s Eamonn Andrews and I.T.V.s Dr J. Bronowski tied for second place, with Richard Dimbleby third. Named best woman Television personality was Polly Elwes, another "Tonighter"; since, of course, a great favourite on "What's My Line?" and with Mr Peter Dimmock, whose wife she became. Isobel Barnett was second in the voting and Vera Lynn third. The best comedian was Tony Hancock; the best vocalists Michael Holliday and Shirley Bassey, and the best musical personality—Eric Robinson.

When television spread its net into the Lebanon in June, 1959, a cynic remarked "Who knows, this may solve the country's problems—we shall stay at home at nights instead of fighting each other."

In June, 1959, Phil "Bilko" Silvers made his first live appearance on British television. On this trip to England he visited Lord's for a Test Match against India and was interviewed by Brian Johnston during an interval. This was truly a soldier's Test Match. Another Army man, though slightly higher in rank, integrity and efficiency than the sergeant from the Motor Platoon, had appeared with Brian Johnston the day before. His name was Montgomery! Mr Silvers was duly made an honorary member of the Lord's Taverners and his name appears in the list of members beneath M. C. Cowdrey, Viscount Portal of Hungerford, K.G., G.C.B., O.M., D.S.O., M.C., His Highness the Maharajah the Gaekwar of Baroda, and D. K. Gaekwad, the Captain of the Indian cricket team.

"Panorama", the B.B.C.s window on the world returned in August after a summer cleaning to start its fifth year as a weekly programme. Coinciding with its return was the appearance of President Eisenhower in Britain and the visit of Mr Kruschev to the United States not far ahead. "Panorama", a dexterous mixture of information and comment, plus an authoritative background, again had as its principal, Richard Dimbleby, with regulars like Christopher Chataway (later drawn from broadcasting by a victory in the General Election in October), Robert Kee, George Scott, Francis Williams, and John Freeman, with Nan Winton getting the woman's point of view from time to time. John Freeman subsequently established himself as an interviewer of great qualities with his "Face to Face" programmes, his subjects varying widely from Hancock to Augustus John, from Lord Morrison to

King Hussein of Jordan, as well as a vigorous discussion with the Secretary of the Communist controlled Electrical Trades Union, on the subject of ballot rigging.

Points included in the Annual Report of the B.B.C. in October 1959, which surveyed the habits of Britain's 26,000,000 viewers were:

1. The average viewer spends nine hours a week and thirteen hours in mid-winter watching television. One-third of the audience looks in for eighteen hours a week.
2. Women watch more than men.
3. Sound broadcasting would still continue to flourish even if every house in the country had television. It would, if the present trends are a guide, continue to command an evening audience of about 1,000,000.
4. The most popular B.B.C. programmes were "What's My Line?", "This is Your Life," "Panorama", "Sportsview", "Hancock's Half Hour", the Sunday play, "Dixon of Dock Green", and "Quatermass". The Audience Research Department produced a mass of statistical information in November, even to the extent of listing the 108 adjectives used by viewers in describing the B.B.C. and Commercial television programmes. "Informative", for instance, was used 86 per cent of the time in relation to the B.B.C. programmes; 64 per cent to Commercial. "Entertaining"—there was little in it: 87 per cent B.B.C.; 90 per cent Commercial. "Childish"—7 per cent B.B.C.; 41 per cent Commercial. "Free and Easy"—40 per cent B.B.C.; 90 per cent Commercial. "Educational"—95 per cent B.B.C.; 56 Commercial. On and on the survey went through—chummy, cocksure, corny, glib, gentlemanly, jazzy (the B.B.C. lost this one incidentally), matey, slangy (a victory for the B.B.C.), tasteful (another B.B.C. success), and youthful (a win for Commercial).

How do the two services attempt to adjust the balance. It is practically impossible. Supposing, for instance, the B.B.C. decided to seek reputation for a "mateyness"; in going for its target it might find that new friends could only be won at the price of antagonizing old ones; this is not good business by any standards; what you gain on the

roundabouts you lose on the swings. The B.B.C.s general policy was to go their own way; to copy would be to manifestly weaken their sharpest competitive weapon.

The coverage leading up to the General Election in the autumn of 1959 and Election Night itself was a memorable piece of television broadcasting. In addition to the increase in the viewing public (4,500,000 television licences in 1955, and over 9,500,000 in 1959) there were three new factors in the broadcasting of the 1959 Election. To begin with, the B.B.C. covered the campaign in news broadcasts. Secondly, the B.B.C. hustings programmes were initiated, mounted in the regions, and there were also three special editions of "Any Questions?", in which members of the public took part asking questions of representatives of the parties, so that regional and local elements of party politics were reflected. Previously television and radio coverage of political issues was only on a national basis. The B.B.C. Audience Research Department went to work on the result of these programmes, basing their statistics on the fact that the adult population of the United Kingdom is about 38,000,000.

The average audience for the twelve Election broadcasts was 21.9 per cent (about 8,000,000) of the adult population; 10.5 per cent viewed B.B.C. and 11.4 per cent Independent television. On the average, the Conservative and Liberal broadcasts drew half their audiences from each service. Labour broadcasts, however, drew 55 per cent from Independent and 45 per cent from B.B.C. The twelve broadcasts took place between 19 September and 6 October. The last by the Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan, drew the largest audience.

Election Night, 8 October, was one of the biggest and most complex operations B.B.C. television had ever undertaken. It was controlled from Studio G, Lime Grove, where Richard Dimbleby, David Butler, Robert McKenzie, computers, score-boards, and the news intake operation were in action throughout a long night and far into the next day, for almost twenty-four hours. The longest break that Dimbleby had was nine minutes; he took the opportunity of having a wash and brush up. Enthusiasm mounted as the first results began to come through. Butler and McKenzie were busy analysing the early swings. They forecast from the outset a substantial Conservative victory. They were right, so right, in fact, that Mr Gaitskell

conceded the fight from his constituency in Leeds about one o'clock. The battle was all over bar the shouting. It was only the extent of the victory that remained to be decided. The trickle homewards from the West End clubs began; some members even took a final whisky and soda with their backs to the television screen, but after a night's sleep they were the first to admire the B.B.C.s Big Three for a magnificent job in front of the cameras. Behind the cameras, the Engineering Division had earned yet another feather in an already feather-crowded cap. They used thirty-seven cameras—fifteen more than for the Coronation and in a much more complicated and diversified way.

Sir Ian Jacob retired as Director-General on 31 December 1959. Sir Arthur ffod, Chairman of the B.B.C., wrote "Sir Ian Jacob joined the Corporation in 1946, and has done great service for it, first in the sphere of European and overseas broadcasting, and later from 1952 onwards, as Director-General. As President of the European Broadcasting Union since its foundation nine years ago, Sir Ian Jacob has also taken a leading part in fostering international co-operation in the field of broadcasting, in Europe and beyond. We owe him much and we wish him well."

Mr Hugh Carleton Greene, O.B.E., became the new Director-General in succession to Sir Ian. When Director of News and Current Affairs, Mr Carleton Greene had given this impression of the duty of the B.B.C. in relation to world affairs: ". . . a service (public service broadcasting) of news and information must not try to influence its audience in any particular direction and must mirror with the greatest possible fairness and objectivity all main streams of opinion without fear or favour. It must not try to make people's minds up for them. In the case of the B.B.C., the only restriction on its freedom in this connection is that it must not have an editorial opinion of its own—and that is a restriction which nobody, I think, would want to see removed.

"I do not mean to imply that such a broadcasting system should be neutral in clear issues of right and wrong—even though it should be between Right and Left. It can, for instance, encourage the right attitude on such matters as the colour bar. In my job in the B.B.C. I should not for a moment admit that a man who wanted to speak in favour of racial intolerance had the same rights as a man who wanted

to condemn it. There are some questions on which one should not be impartial."

The opening of the giant Television Centre in midsummer 1960, a building described by Gerald Beadle, Director of Television, as the largest, best equipped and most carefully planned factory of its kind in the world, was clear enough proof that television had become one of the world's great industries. As far as the B.B.C. was concerned it was an industry stimulated by ever increasing competition from commercial television. The scramble was on to capture the big outside events. The B.B.C. scooped the first ever Grand National on television; Commercial replied by capturing the Derby, the blue riband of the turf, although the B.B.C. ultimately won a share in it. The wedding of Princess Margaret was another operation of some magnitude for outside broadcasts. It has been suggested that this relay presented even greater problems than the Coronation. This, however, is not a view held by Peter Dimmock, Head of Outside Broadcasts. "The Coronation," he said, "with its seemingly endless marching columns and carriages, was a more complicated transmission altogether." The State visit of General De Gaulle, the appearance of the Duke of Edinburgh in "Grandstand", and the Eurovision transmission from Rome covering the Olympics were some of the highlights of a television year of activities now too crowded to enumerate other than as a gigantic programme parade. The report of the Television Advisory Committee issued as a White Paper in May, 1960, contained one piece of information which was vital to every owner of a television receiver. It was that the 405-line services would need to be continued for many years, and therefore no one need be deterred from buying television sets of the existing types. Those who imagined that colour was just round the corner and were holding back before buying a new set could go ahead and make their purchase without fear; colour was still a long way off. The 405-line standards were adopted by the B.B.C. in February, 1937, and the report stated that the choice was a wise one at the time, but good as the 405-line picture may be for the size of screens now in general use, we do not think that the 405-line system will be adequate for the next twenty-five years. Consideration had been given to the potentialities of the 625-line standards adopted in 1951 by the remainder of Europe (apart from France which adopted 819-line, and Belgium

which has both 625 and 819) and subsequently by many other countries.

The Sub-Committee felt—with one dissentient, that with further development of this system using a 6 Mc/s video bandwidth and receivers with improved noise factors 625-line pictures, particularly the larger pictures, would show a definite superiority. It was further stated that colour should only be introduced using the line standards to be ultimately adopted for monochrome transmission and therefore any decision with regard to the introduction of colour must follow a decision on line standards. It was “as you were” then, for both line-standards and colour for quite a while.

When 1961 arrived a little band of pioneers were able to say “Twenty-five years ago, it doesn’t seem possible”; twenty-five years since Baird and E.M.I. moved their equipment into Alexandra Palace; since Birkinshaw presided over their presence with infinite tact; since Madden was told that he needed twenty programmes in ten days’ time and produced them out of orderly pandemonium; since Leslie Mitchell was being dug in the ribs in the spotlight studio and Joan Miller was saying “You’re through” on “Picture Page”; since Eric Robinson was strumming his guitar in the “Tea Timers”. Today, the vast Television Centre is a permanent monument commemorating these early settlers in a Television colony. The Centre is a factory of switches and buttons, of intricate and complicated modern electronic machinery, precision timing and great efficiency. Television isn’t fun any more; it is a highly commercialized industry. What fun it would be if just for one day we could go back to “Ally Pally” and see it as it was in August, 1936, perhaps the day when Joan Miller had missed her usual bus and as she climbed the hill she saw almost the entire staff of B.B.C. television looking anxiously out of the window, shouting “Hurry up Joan, you’re late.” Television couldn’t wait for Joan Miller these days.

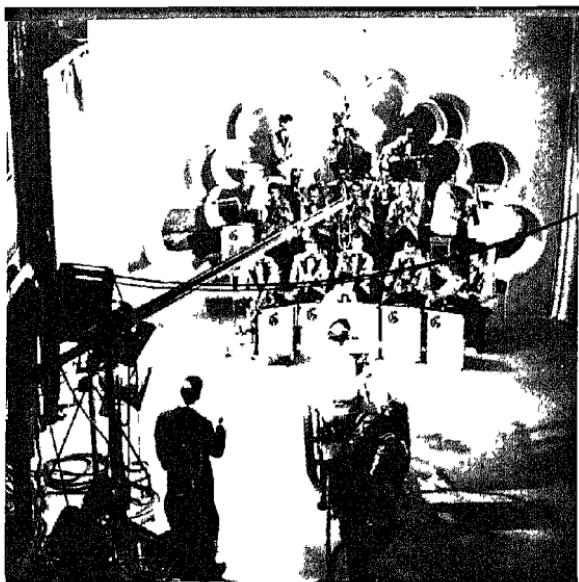
## CHAPTER VII: EUROVISION

*The first relay in 1950 . . . Anglo-French Television Liaison Committee . . . the Lille experiment of 1954 . . . Winter games from Cortina . . . the work of the E.B.U. . . . Mr "Fix it" and co-operation in many countries.*

THE miracle of television has been heralded as one of the most notable scientific achievements of the twentieth century. The part which Eurovision has played has been large, intensely exciting, and reflects great credit upon the men whose brains have conceived and developed the idea of an inter-nation network; a network which by 1959 embraced these twelve countries, and sixteen services; all members of the European Broadcasting Union, the nerve centre of Eurovision. The E.B.U. has played a vital role in promoting a happy working agreement for sharing facilities between countries.

Oesterreichischer Rundfunk	Austria
Institut National Belge de Radiodiffusion: <i>French language</i>	Belgium
Belgisch Nationaal Instituut voor Radio-Omroep: <i>Flemish</i>	Belgium
Danmarks Radio	Denmark
Radiodiffusion-Télévision Française	France
Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Rundfunkanstalten der Bundesrepublik Deutschland	German Federal Republic
Radiotelevisione Italiana	Italy
Compagnie Luxembourgeoise de Télédiffusion	Luxemburg
Radio Monte-Carlo	Monaco
Nederlandse Televisie Stichting	Netherlands
Sveriges Radio	Sweden
Schweizerische Rundspruchgesellschaft: <i>German language</i>	Switzerland
Société Suisse de Radiodiffusion: <i>French language</i>	Switzerland
Società Svizzera di Radiodiffusione: <i>Italian language</i>	Switzerland
British Broadcasting Corporation	United Kingdom
Independent Television Authority	United Kingdom

In addition, Eurovision programmes could be distributed over the

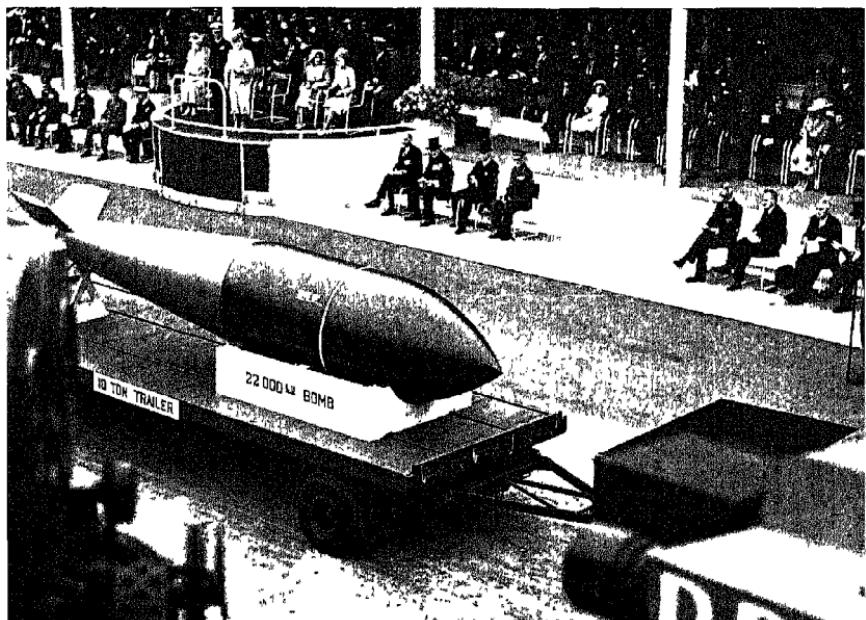


### THE SERVICE OPENS AGAIN

GERALDO and his orchestra giving a television performance on 7 June 1946, the day of the reopening after the war

### THE VICTORY PARADE—8 JUNE 1946

A 10-ton bomb (known as "The Grand Slam") passing the saluting base on which stand KING GEORGE VI and QUEEN ELIZABETH Seated, are QUEEN MARY and their ROYAL HIghNESSES THE PRINCESS ELIZABETH and PRINCESS MARGARET WINSTON CHURCHILL is seated beside CLEMENT ATTLEE next to the saluting base





A MEMORABLE OCCASION  
A happy group, when HER ROYAL HIGHNESS THE PRINCESS ELIZABETH and the DUKE OF EDINBURGH visited Alexandra Palace in July, 1948, and watched a production of "Hubert Follies". With them in this picture are SIR WILLIAM HALEY (then Director-General of the B.B.C.), MR NORMAN COLLINS (then Controller) and LADY RAPHAEL (of the B.B.C. Board of Governors).

networks of Finland and Jugoslavia, but neither the Oy. Yleisradio nor the Jugoslovenska Radiodifuzija was then able to contribute to the Eurovision network. It was still a formidable list which had sprung up like a giant mushroom from the modest beginnings of only a few years previously. Inter-nation co-operation began with the establishment of an Anglo-French Television Liaison Committee in November, 1950. The Committee first discussed the possibility of a series of programmes to be described as "A Week in Paris" to be carried out in July, 1951. In August, 1950, the B.B.C. had carried out a couple of television outside broadcasts from Calais—the first time that television had been brought to the British public from a point outside the United Kingdom and the first time that a television link had been set up across an international boundary. These programmes, however, were seen only in the United Kingdom and not in France. France had not at that time started to develop its television network; its only transmitters were in Paris, and to link Calais to Paris as well as to London would, at that time, have been beyond the joint resources of the French Television authority—Radiodiffusion-Télévision Française—and the B.B.C. The second and more cogent reason was that the French and British services were operating—and they still are—on different line standards. At that time there was no known technical means of converting the vision signals from one standard to the other. From the B.B.C.'s point of view it was still a most ambitious project and a considerable amount of preparatory staff-work was involved. It meant despatching a large outside broadcasts team, with all its equipment, to Calais and the setting up of a series of point-to-point radio links between Calais and London. The Channel was spanned by a link working between the Hôtel de Ville at Calais, and the top of the cliffs at Swingate near Dover, using a frequency of 4,500 Mc/s. The span from Swingate to London required three links in tandem and these operated on 6,800 Mc/s, 64.75 Mc/s and 4,500 Mc/s respectively. With the object of avoiding moving hum bars on the picture, a telephone circuit between Dover and Calais carried a signal derived from the British electricity mains and this was used to lock the waveform generators of the Calais outside broadcast unit.

The results, if not spectacular, were most encouraging, but it was decided that the "Week in Paris" idea was still a little ambitious as a

prospect for 1951 and it was decided to defer it until the summer of 1952. Meantime, serious thought was given both in France and in the United Kingdom, to possible means of conversion from the French line standard to the British and vice versa. By February, 1952, sufficient progress had been made for it to be decided that a comparative trial between the French and British standards converters was worth undertaking. These tests proved that both French and British equipment was good enough to justify plans being made for a series of joint R.T.F. (Radiodiffusion-Télévision Française)/B.B.C. programmes in July. These were to be produced in Paris using French cameras and equipment and would be broadcast simultaneously by the two services.

R.T.F. had by this time opened its first 819-line Regional television station at Lille and this was fed by a permanent circuit from Paris. The R.T.F. took the responsibility for the next link from Lille to Cassel—a high point on the way to Calais. At Cassel, the B.B.C. standards converter was installed and the conveyance of the 405-line signal from this point was up to the B.B.C. The route they chose was Alembon-Swingate-Wrotham-London. The total distance was about 500 kilometres as compared with 150 for the Calais transmission. This great relay took place between 8 and 14 July. The quality of the pictures produced in Britain varied a great deal. Some were extremely good; others were marred by every imperfection known to the television engineer. The relay was still regarded as a success since these imperfections would obviously be eradicated in the light of technical developments which it was known could and would make rapid strides. There was no reason at all why the Coronation of Her Majesty should not be seen on the Continent. This view was taken at a meeting in London in December, 1952, and as a result of some prodigious efforts by all concerned the requisite circuits were established and the B.B.C. Coronation broadcast was relayed by a total of twelve transmitters in France, the Netherlands and Western Germany, the extreme point on the network being Berlin.

Great impetus was given to the development of international relays by the starting of television services in a number of other countries and in Paris in January, 1954, plans were laid for a much more ambitious series of daily programmes, involving eight national television organizations, to be carried out in the month starting on 6 June. The

idea was that each country should contribute one or more programme to be relayed by all the others. An international co-ordination centre was set up at Lille. Tests were carried out in April and they brought immeasurable problems. In many cases extremely improvised equipment was being used. These problems were analysed and were solved if some, only partially, but the Lille experiment duly began on the appointed day and the pictures obtained over far longer links than had ever been attempted before, were, on average, surprisingly good.

The period 6 June to 4 July was chosen because during that month the matches in Switzerland for the World Football Cup offered a first-rate popular attraction. The enormously complicated engineering side of the relays was organized by a technical committee under the chairmanship of Mr M. J. L. Pulling of the B.B.C. When the whole vast network had been connected, it ran to 4,000 miles of radio circuit, extending between Belfast and Rome with branch lines to Copenhagen and Berlin, using forty-four transmitters, about eighty relay stations, and four converter stations. One of its most spectacular links, which connected the German and Italian television systems and forms a permanent part of the Swiss national network, carried television signals across the Alps; it ran from Chasseral, 5,000 ft up in the Jura range of northern Switzerland, through a relay station sixty miles away and 12,000 ft high on the Jungfraujoch, and on to the summit of Monte Generoso, near Lake Lugano in southern Switzerland. It was manufactured in Britain, and formed part of £2,000,000 worth of British equipment supplied to the Eurovision network.

Some seven weeks before this month of international television opened, the ambitious project took a hard knock from the International Federation of Musicians, Actors and Variety Artistes. Meeting at a conference in Paris the three federations resolved that all organizations affiliated to them and having agreements with television organizations should not extend their agreements beyond 15 June 1954 and that organizations having no such agreements should boycott all international relays until the three federations had reached an agreement with the European Broadcasting Union. In actual fact it was not until 1 February 1957 that the first agreement negotiated between the federations and the E.B.U. came into force; it provides for supplementary payments to performers ranging between 50 per cent for

programmes relayed between three countries and 150 per cent for those relayed between eight or more. This performers' boycott forced several countries participating in Eurovision's special month to revise their plans at short notice, and for a further two and a half years it tended to confine international relays to events mostly out of the studio. It thus limited cultural exchanges and placed a great emphasis upon sporting events. In fact from the beginning of the Eurovision month in 1954 to the end of 1956, 65.9 per cent of Eurovision's programmes were sporting; only 2.2 per cent were cultural and 4.7 per cent drama and music. Switzerland and Italy provided the programmes for the opening day in 1954. The Fête des Narcisses at Montreux in the afternoon and an evening visit to the Vatican City, where the Pope spoke in five languages and delivered the Apostolic blessing, contrived to make a memorable day. Eurovision had arrived. People had sat by their firesides on a wet Whit Sunday and seen the Pope; interest had been stimulated on the Continent where the sale of television sets showed a marked increase even before the month's relays were over. The United Kingdom's main contribution was broadcast on 12 June and included scenes of the Queen reviewing the R.N.V.R. on Horse Guards Parade, the Glasgow Police Sports and the Richmond Horse Show.

When the Lille experiment ended it was imperative to pause and take a deep breath. Eurovision was here to stay but how was it to be kept going on a permanent basis. There were many difficulties, both technical and administrative; there was the all-important question of the difference of language to overcome. At the end of 1954 Great Britain had temporarily withdrawn from the Eurovision network, but rejoined it permanently on 17 September 1955; by that time the first section of a permanent two-way television link between London and the Continent was completed. During the first month after its return the B.B.C. contributed scenes from the Woolwich Searchlight Tattoo, the International Floodlit Athletics at the White City, and the Horse of the Year Show at Harringay. A most welcome and moving programme received in Britain was the Arnhem Memorial Day.

In the New Year of 1956 the Italians undertook the prodigious feat of organizing relays from the Olympic Winter Games at Cortina, in which every one of the Eurovision countries participated. This was

followed in April by another outstanding multilateral relay—the transmissions from Monte Carlo during the marriage celebrations of Prince Rainier and Miss Grace Kelly. The successful experiment of a Eurovision song contest in 1956 had led to the event having won a place annually in Eurovision affairs. There have been many programmes since Eurovision began of special technical significance; there is one which should be singled out both for its technical novelty and because it was completely unheralded. On 14 July 1958, the R.T.F. fed to the Eurovision network from two pick-up points in the South of France a television programme from Algiers, 800 kilometres away on the other side of the Mediterranean. This remarkable link had been achieved by equipping an aircraft as a radio relay station, the aircraft flying some 6,000 metres above the Balearic Islands, about half-way between Algiers and Marseilles. It was the first occasion when the Eurovision network has been supplied with a programme from another continent.

One day, perhaps, a link with North America will become reality. There has been a good deal of talk over a long period on this subject. The technical problems are by no means insurmountable; the problem is how the fabulous cost could ever be justified. This situation is likely to continue so long as a satisfactory television picture requires as large a bandwidth as is now used for conventional systems. Once a method was perfected whereby a satisfactory picture could be obtained with a very substantially narrower band of frequencies, then a transatlantic circuit could become technically simple and economically feasible. The establishment of inter-vision by the Russians for the Eastern Bloc countries has now been successful in bringing Moscow within range. The next step now will be Tokyo.

The E.B.U., with its technical centre in Brussels and its administrative office in Geneva, is the co-ordinating centre of all Eurovision programmes. The co-ordination of these programme exchanges falls into four main categories. Unilateral programmes are originated in one country for reception in another; a case in point is the Scots Guards band at the Brussels Exhibition which was relayed in Great Britain but not in Belgium. Unilateral inserts are similar except that they are only a part of a programme in the receiving country such as a single item for a news bulletin. Bilateral relays are originated in one country and taken both in that country and another in the E.B.U.

network. Multilateral relays are those which are taken by a number of countries as well as the country of origin. In the early days of Eurovision, the unilateral relay was not possible. The programme could only be passed into the network through the local service, so that if an event took place during normal programme hours in that country and that country did not want to take it, nothing more could be done. Now, however, a second line system has been installed so that a programme can be passed from one country to another, by-passing both the home system and others *en route*.

This collaboration was taken a step further on New Year's Eve, 1957, with the arrival of the single programme to which several countries contribute under the control of a single director. On that night a producer at the E.B.U. centre in Brussels—by unanimous invitation it was Francis Essex of the B.B.C.—was in control of the television services of ten countries. He kept in touch with them over an omnibus talk-back circuit, and in addition to the complicated split-second cutting by eleven switching centres hundreds of miles apart, a split-screen effect was achieved, where, for instance, a small boy in Brussels was seen apparently lighting the announcer's cigarette in London.

The basis of the fundamental working of Eurovision is friendly give and take. If, for example, Italy gave the B.B.C. facilities for a programme from Venice which they themselves were not intending to use in their own service, then Italy would be in credit so far as the B.B.C. is concerned and she would be offered comparable facilities from Britain at some future date. Cecil McGivern described this feeling of Eurovision good will when he said "There is something very much deeper in Eurovision than, shall we say, Wimbledon being seen by various countries. There is the B.B.C.s purpose of using broadcasting for the good of the world. There is the gratifying fact that when I go to an E.B.U. conference I meet friends. Not only friends, but good friends. We have learned to know one another, to respect each other. This fundamentally, is Eurovision."

Eurovision has done something else. It has offered the B.B.C.s Mr "Fix It" full scope for his talents. Imlay Watts was born in Johannesburg; he was educated at an English Preparatory School, and subsequently at Ecole-des-Roches, the French equivalent of Eton. In 1932,

he entered the Motion Picture business, and it was during the Alexander Korda régime that Imlay Watts learned to fix. If you worked for Korda, and he wanted a herd of elephants by half past three, you got them, or else you no longer worked for Korda. In one executive capacity or another Imlay had a close association with such great pictures as *The Ghost Goes West*, with Robert Donat, directed by René Clair (who could hardly speak a word of English); *Knight Without Armour*—the first Dietrich picture in this country; *The Drum*, featuring Sabu; *Wings of the Morning*—the first British technicolour film with Annabella and Henry Fonda. By 1938, the Motion Picture Industry was well conscious of the development of television, so Imlay Watts joined the B.B.C. for six months to have a look round. He is still looking round in 1961. If you want a seat on a plane leaving for the North Pole in twenty minutes which is full anyway, he will arrange for the pilot to move over and make room for you. Should you be stranded abroad with an empty wallet he will have it filled by telephone from London. This, in fact, actually happened on one occasion in 1948 during stringent currency restrictions when Michael Mills and Holland Bennett were on the Continent looking for talent; they ended up in Hamburg wanting to travel on to Berlin but without a bean. They called London from Hamburg. Mr "Fix It" told them to go and have a good lunch with plenty of courses and by the time they were through to the coffee the money to pay the bill and to travel on to Berlin would be forthcoming—it was!

Why has this man got such an enormous pull on the Continent? Partly because of his wartime activities when he worked in the Psychological Warfare Department of S.H.A.E.F., was co-director of the Free French Radio Station and later became chief of S.H.A.E.F. Radio, in Belgium. He has a fluent command of languages and loves the impossible. People are attracted by his bubbling personality. That is very important.

His contacts have been a priceless asset in many a crisis. On 6 February 1958, when an aircraft returning from Belgrade crashed at Munich Airport with the players and officials of Manchester United Football Club aboard, the B.B.C. were informed of the disaster twenty minutes after it had happened. They wanted to show film of the crash and perhaps interviews with survivors on the ten o'clock

news. It was then about four o'clock. All telephone lines to Munich were blocked incessantly by national newspaper correspondents so that there was no chance of getting through to Munich by normal methods. The News Department turned to Imlay Watts—what could he do? Within five minutes he was speaking to Heinz Von Plato, Director of Programmes in Hamburg. Von Plato talked on his direct line with Munich, where firemen were still trying to extinguish the fire and where considerable confusion still existed, but the Director of Programmes made arrangements to make possible the transmission from Munich in time for the B.B.C.s ten o'clock news. The B.B.C. then had to warn the countries through which the relay would pass. Suddenly it was realized that the link at Dover was not manned. An engineer was sent down at once and only when he reached Dover did he find out that not only was Lille not manned, but the engineer had gone to a cinema with the key of the station in his pocket. The man was traced, brought out of the cinema, and he opened up Lille in time. The surgeons and nurses at the Rechts des Isar Hospital at Munich were magnificent; the co-operation of the German Television Service was deeply appreciated too, in bringing to a nation stunned by this tragedy the up to the minute news; all the evening there had been conflicting reports.

The Belgian Television Service played a notable part in a transmission on another occasion when Britain was in the throes of a musicians' strike which was crippling television. Cecil McGivern asked Imlay Watts if he could rake up anything from the Continent for the Saturday night show. Forty-eight hours hence. Imlay Watts did the rounds of the television countries by telephone and couldn't believe his ears when Bert Leysen, Director of the Flemish Service in Belgium, asked him if he would like the Moscow State Circus. Leysen had no camera units available; there was no certainty that the Russians would agree, but Michael Henderson was sent off straightaway so that at least if the transmission was possible an experienced English commentator would be on the spot. The Russians eventually agreed and Bert Leysen gallantly brought back one of his units which was deployed elsewhere to do the job. There was no rehearsal—there was no prior announcement by the B.B.C. Quite out of the blue the announcer simply said "We are now going over to Brussels for the

Moscow State Circus." The silent screen came to life with a fanfare of trumpets, balloons were everywhere—it might have been New Year's Eve at the Chelsea Arts—and so without a moment of camera rehearsal the Moscow State Circus was on British television screens, and what a fantastic performance; what a great blow to world television when Bert Leysen was later killed in a car crash; his memory lives on in the minds of his many friends in this country.

The Italian Television Service made a mighty contribution to "The Restless Sphere", a programme during the Geophysical Year compered by His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh. Aubrey Singer wanted to include shots of Vesuvius taken from the top of the crater, complete with commentator, in a live transmission. He rang his opposite number in Rome who said that because of the appalling prevailing gale it was quite impossible for a man to stand up there, let alone commentate. The Italians were then told that the B.B.C. were quite certain that the Duke would be delighted if this momentous undertaking could be carried through, and as the Italians as a race are "Mr Fix Its" they made a further study of the situation and finally said it would be done, but as a safety measure it must be done on film and not live. But Mr Pardi did do it live and commentating in perfect English he only brought the live transmission to a close and went over to film when he was literally being swept off his feet in the teeth of the gale, an incredible performance. To get the film shots a team of donkeys with television equipment strapped to their backs had made a pilgrimage every day for a fortnight; many was the time that filming was not possible because Vesuvius happened to be in a particularly angry mood that day. Undaunted, the donkeys persevered.

The B.B.C. and the Austrian Television Service worked hand in hand on the Hungarian tragedy. When the B.B.C. rang Gerhard Freund for sixteen seats on a plane to Vienna because the Talks Department wanted full coverage of the refugees streaming out of Hungary, Freund offered his full co-operation but asked in return if he could borrow one of the B.B.C.s film editors over the week-end to help his overworked staff cut and edit the hundreds of feet of film taken at the border.

A herculean performance by the Swiss enabled Italy to receive a Christmas Carol service from King's College Chapel, Cambridge.

The thermometer showed many degrees below freezing, and icicles at the top of a mountain were blocking the television picture *en route* to Italy. Five minutes before the transmission was due to begin two engineers braved the elements, climbed the offending mountain and knocked the icicles off. This showed great determination by Eduard Haas, the Director of Swiss Television, and indomitable courage and an unswerving devotion to duty by the two brave engineers. Knocking icicles off the top of a mountain is not everybody's cup of tea. There are many better pastimes on Christmas Eve.

Few of the small contingent of B.B.C. personnel who went to Denmark for the occasion of the State visit of Her Majesty the Queen can easily forget it. Because of court protocol the television cameras were not allowed to show the guests eating at the State Banquet, but they were to be allowed to televise the speeches. It is custom in Denmark for the speeches to follow the fish course, and the King himself was to give a signal when all was ready for the television operation to begin. The producer watched his monitor screen on a closed circuit and could see from what was happening that it was "Any minute now", so the programme began with the camera panning round a small ante-chamber until the King gave the signal—but the fish course was so delicious and so popular among the guests that the King served a second helping! Richard Dimbleby had the pleasure of commentating for about twenty minutes on the beauties of the ante-chamber! This was nothing to "Old Smoothie", but mention of the fish course in Denmark brings back a chill down the spine of at least one member of the entourage.

Sometimes even Mr "Fix It" fails. Once he was asked to get the Venus de Milo moved in the Louvre, because the B.B.C. could not muster enough cable length to reach it. It was moved, but it was found quite impossible to light it effectively and viewers were merely shown the room with the statue in the distance. "Fancy the cameras going to the Louvre," said the press, "without a close-up of the Venus." How right they were; how lucky that Imlay Watts was not still working for Korda!

When he left Paris in 1946 to become Studio Productions Manager of the Television Service Imlay Watts said to the Director-General and his colleagues of the French Broadcasting Service, "One day, I

hope we'll see each other on television, and if I, in the smallest possible way, can do anything to accelerate that day, I shall do so. I love France and I am dedicated to television." In 1950, British Television cameras went to France to take the first positive step towards Eurovision. The big three of the operation were T. H. Bridgewater, on the engineering side, Peter Dimmock, then Assistant Head of Outside Broadcasts, and Imlay Watts. Cecil McGivern, intensely interested in the project, made frequent visits during the six weeks' preparation.

Calais gave itself over to the B.B.C. No one more than the Gendarmes. There was even a suggestion to get a few ships turned round—they would look better the other way! More than once the whole operation seemed impossible; it was chaos; the shoe-strings holding it together were in danger of snapping any minute; the jumping of each hurdle inspired Cecil McGivern to aim higher still; in the end he wanted fireworks; he wanted the lot, and he got it. The pioneers of Calais were the pioneers of Eurovision; they made an immeasurably important piece of history. Dimmock, Bridgewater, Watts and McGivern have earned their places in that history.

In 1960 eighteen European countries were linked together for the transmission of pictures from the opening of the Olympic Games in Rome. It was the biggest television network yet created on the Continent, including Finland and Jugoslavia, besides four countries of the East European block, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Poland and Hungary. In 1961, the modern world sealed a new height. The Soviet Union put a man in space to circle the earth. That man, Major Gagarin, was given a hero's reception in Moscow. These celebrations were televised live from the airport and Red Square to the people of Britain with an amazingly good reception. The B.B.C. swiftly followed up with another direct relay from Moscow—the May Day festivities. Eurovision strides on, with the sky the limit.

## CHAPTER VIII: TELEVISION AND THE ROYAL FAMILY

*Craxton, the Royal Producer . . . the Queen's first Christmas message on Television . . . the Duke of Edinburgh as a Television personality . . . Covent Garden in 1951.*

ON 23 April 1924, the voice of King George V was heard from the opening of the British Empire Exhibition at Wembley. This was the first time the voice of a reigning Monarch had been broadcast. Although short, it was a memorable transmission which paved the way for subsequent Royal broadcasts to have the effect of drawing the throne and the people more realistically towards each other. The world now felt they knew the King as a man; he had become more than a symbol of leadership—a figure which millions had seen only in newspaper photographs. Sound radio had thus played an integral part in a process of uniting the Royal Family and the people more closely; the advent of television has increased this development considerably. The dignity of the Queen at all times and her complete dedication to the heavy responsibilities which she inherited from her father have served as a constant reminder of the strength of the British throne today, but at the same time Her Majesty is seen by her people as a wife, and a mother of young children; she experiences the same emotions, the same hopes, the same happiness with her family as does every other mother. This link of reality is immensely strong.

In a world of fast diminishing Monarchies the British Royal Family is the envy of the whole world. Interest in them is tremendous, an interest which appearances on television on great National occasions and at other times have done much to foster. The Queen, surrounded by pomp and ceremony, has a love for the simple things of life;

perhaps then, this simple story is the best example of the new approach to the Crown which television has stimulated. Mr S. J. de Lotbinière, the B.B.C.s then Head of Television Outside Broadcasts, was once driving to Oxford on the day when the Queen was unveiling the Commonwealth Air Forces Memorial at Runnymede. The ceremony was being televised and Mr de Lotbinière felt he ought to see it. As his car sped towards a small village he watched for a television aerial, and finally seeing one near the road he knocked at the door of the house and sought permission to come in and watch. The occupant was an old man of 82; they saw the ceremony together, and throughout the television broadcast the old man was complaining bitterly because he thought the Queen was being allowed to work much too hard. It was Coronation year and he had seen her often on television and was thus much more conscious of the Queen's multifarious and exacting duties. Never before, in a long life, had he known so much about the throne; never had he had the Sovereign's welfare so much at heart.

The initial reaction of the Royal Family to television was understandably one of reluctance. The strain, both physical and emotional, of solemn National events is very great in normal circumstances, not least when long-range cameras are portraying every detail in close-up. If anything were to go wrong it would be seen on millions of television screens simultaneously; the incident could not be taken out in the editing as can be done with a news film. Admittedly, the producer does have a remedy; he can cut immediately to another camera, but not before the hint has been given that something is wrong, so that his remedy is only a partial cure. For the Queen a most difficult moment on television is during the playing of the National Anthem. She cannot join in the singing; she cannot smile, nor indeed can she move in the slightest way. It has always been the policy of the Corporation not to show the Queen in close-up throughout the playing of the National Anthem. There are a number of other points of dignity, etiquette and good taste which the B.B.C. have been at pains to observe, and these could only have been achieved by establishing a continuity of thought. This was clearly realized in the first place when the wish was expressed at Buckingham Palace that their association with the B.B.C. should be maintained by the same individuals throughout, and this system has worked in practice admirably. The Liaison Officer, as it

were, is Mr de Lotbinière. The Royal Producer is Mr Antony Craxton, and the Royal Commentator, Mr Richard Dimbleby.

Antony Craxton who joined sound radio in 1941, and television ten years later, became Royal Producer when he took over from Mr Keith Rogers. He, like the Duke of Edinburgh, was educated at Gordonstoun, and this common brotherhood must have helped him in carrying out duties as important as any matter of State. Whether it has been an outside broadcast, or the Queen's Christmas message, or a studio programme by the Duke of Edinburgh, complete success is always absolutely essential. In this respect the Royal Family rely unconditionally on Craxton to see that it is. They respect his infinite knowledge of the subject, his quiet good manners, and his intense dislike of personal publicity.

Although the Royal Family are conscious of television as an added strain in their public life, they have democratically accepted it as a natural trend of progress. Initially, when permission was sought to televise a Royal event restrictions were invariably imposed as to where cameras may or may not be. Today, whilst the Queen is always told where the cameras are, the Royal Family do everything they can to help television. At the wedding of Princess Margaret and Mr Antony Armstrong-Jones, the B.B.C. were worried by the long delay that was likely to take place after the Royal entourage had arrived back from the ceremony, before the balcony appearance, because the official photographs were being taken first. The Palace was asked if it were possible, in any way, to shorten this delay. The wedding party did willingly co-operate and for the sake of television made an earlier appearance on the balcony than the original timing schedule had suggested that they might.

Perhaps the ice was broken years before by King George VI when the B.B.C. were to televise from Victoria Station the arrival of foreign dignitaries. The King was to meet them, and when permission had been given to televise, he became aware of the fact that at certain moments his guests would not be seen to the best advantage by those watching television screens. This, on a matter of courtesy, worried the King to such an extent, that in his own hand he drew up a diagram suggesting where another camera might be placed on an adjoining platform. This diagram was handed to the B.B.C. who found it impracticable to place

a camera on the platform itself, so they asked if they could mount it on the screen train which always draws in to the adjoining platform for security reasons. The King undoubtedly found a moment to glance across to see whether his suggestion had solved a problem; it certainly had. The King's consideration for his guests down to the minutest detail was so traditionally that of a great man and a gentleman.

In giving permission to televise events, there has always been reluctance on the part of the Royal Family to allow television cameras to intrude into religious services. They have felt there is something distasteful in having cameras focused on people in the act of worship, especially during prayers; it is hardly the time to be submitted to public gaze. There is an unwritten law that the Royal Family are never seen at prayer, but they have not allowed this sincere belief to deprive the world of historic occasions. There were, to begin with, certain prejudices to break down before the cameras were allowed inside Westminster Abbey for the Coronation.

It was on Christmas Day, 1957, that Her Majesty was first televised delivering the traditional Christmas Message from the Sovereign which her grandfather had inaugurated on sound radio in 1932, and her father had continued in 1937, the first year after his accession to the throne. Now the ordeal was magnified by the presence of the cameras. The Queen rehearsed every detail with precise care. The B.B.C. made a special film for her in which Miss Sylvia Peters, a very experienced and polished television announcer, was shown delivering a speech in a number of different ways. Both the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh contributed suggestions after each rehearsal; both had immeasurable confidence in Craxton and his technical team, a confidence, which, assessed by the standard of the final transmission, had not been misplaced. Newspapers throughout the world were unanimous in their praise. The setting was the Long Library at Sandringham. The Queen, seated by her desk, gave a lasting impression of charm, dignity and fluency, culminating with an infectious smile. One critic wrote: "Like millions of other people I felt that a legend and a symbol had come to life . . . when a reigning Monarch smiled in the living-rooms of countless homes."

In 1959, because of the impending birth of Prince Andrew, the Christmas message was not televised as in the two previous years, and

a short message was recorded in sound only. In future the message is unlikely to be broadcast live again, and will most probably be recorded by sound and television some days before the 25th, so that it can be heard throughout the world at the appropriate time for the country concerned. Whilst three o'clock has proved a suitable time in Great Britain, this does not apply elsewhere and there has been, perhaps, a touch of unreality in listening to the Queen in the middle of the night. It will also leave Her Majesty free to relax completely with her family on Christmas Day, a privilege which she so richly earns.

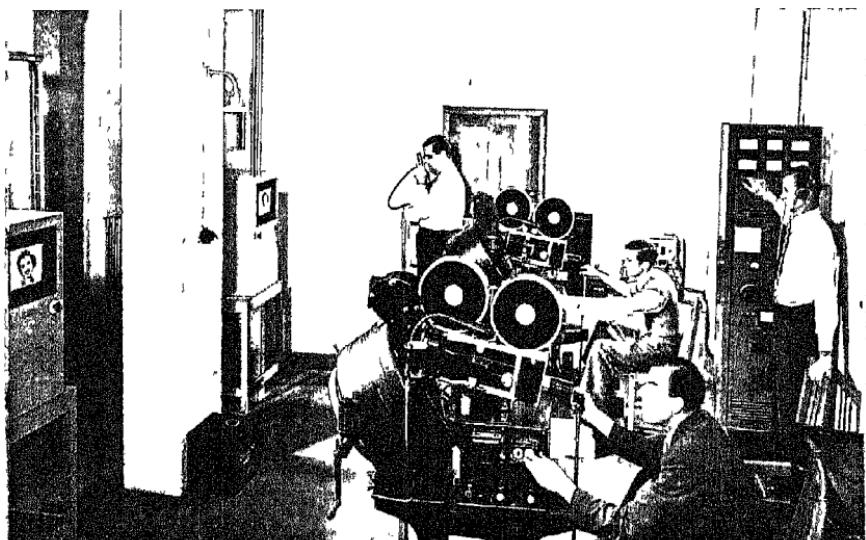
In May, 1957, the Duke of Edinburgh had become the first member of the Royal Family to be televised from a B.B.C. studio. It was a programme for the children; in fact, as it turned out, it was a great occasion for everyone. The Duke gave a marathon performance as he set out to go "Round the World in Forty Minutes", to discuss and illustrate his world tour. Forty minutes seemed an incredibly short time to cover so much ground—and so it proved. The Duke overran by nearly a quarter of an hour; he talked for almost fifty-five minutes without a script, merely notes. He was as relaxed as the most experienced television performer, and prompted an official to remark "We would not have trusted anyone else with an unscripted broadcast to continue for so long". One anecdote followed another. Showing a forbidden fruit from the Pacific Islands the Duke said he had tasted it and added "I'm not surprised it was forbidden!" He included the now famous description of himself in New Guinea as "Number One fella b'long Missis Queen"; and finally realizing he had exceeded his time he remarked whimsically: "I am over time as usual. It has been a great rush and I am sure I have left you in a muddle." Such was far from the case. He had established himself as a television personality.

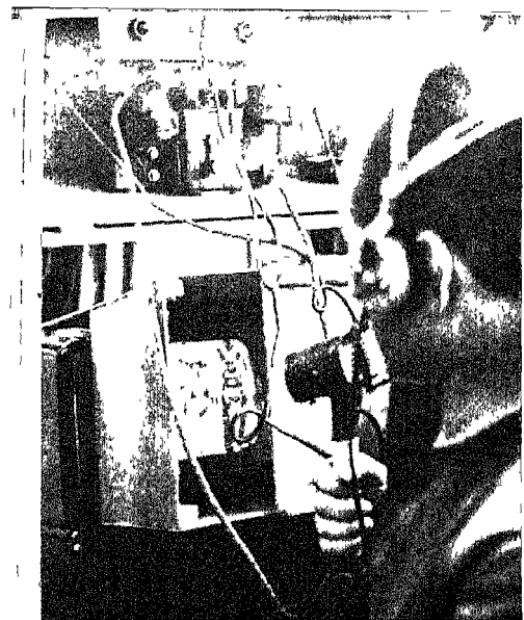
It was a year before when His Royal Highness first appeared in a B.B.C. television programme; he gave a lecture for the Central Council of Physical Recreation at the Park Lane Hotel, the title of which was "Active Leisure". As it was necessary to have some interviews during the programme, Peter Dimmock, Head of Television Outside Broadcasts, suggested that an interviewer should be booked for this purpose, as an interview on television is rather a tricky business. The Duke insisted that he should do it himself. "I spend my life interviewing people," he said, "I don't see any need to get anyone else to do it."



THE WEDDING OF H R H THE PRINCESS MARGARET  
The main control centre for the wedding. PETER DIMMOCK is watching the camera positions. He is in touch with each camera-man at the various points and so is able to direct the complete operation

A photograph taken in June, 1950, of the telerecording room at Alexandra Palace where television programmes (both the pictures and the accompanying sound) were recorded on film. The television pictures are displayed on the cathode-ray tube screens on the left facing two recording cameras through which the film runs continuously at a speed corresponding to 25 frames per second



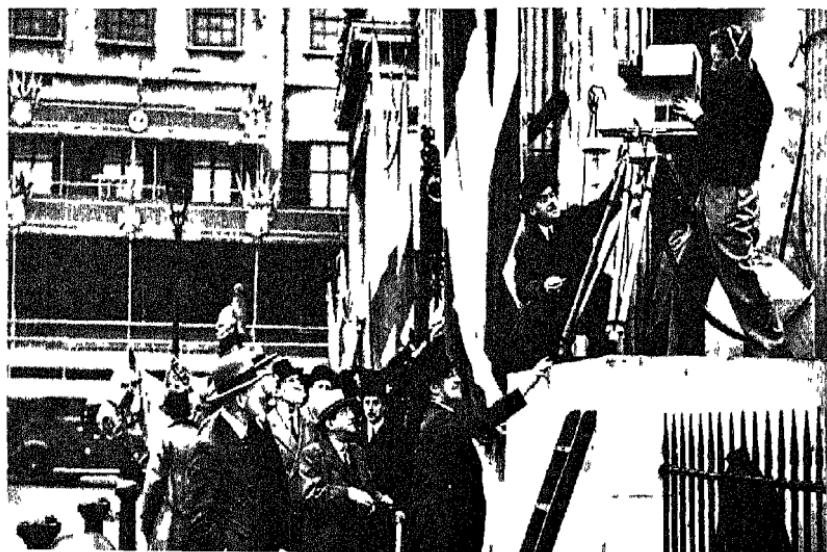


### THE CORONATION IN 1953

The B B C's Coronation relay, at the crowning of HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II, did more than any one single event to stimulate the growth of television not only in this country but abroad through the various Eurovision links. This picture shows one of many foreign commentators watching a picture monitor from which he was able to describe the ceremony

### THE CORONATION IN 1937

The Television Advisory Committee inspecting the installation of the camera at Hyde Park Corner for the B B C's first ever major outside broadcast—the Coronation of THEIR MAJESTIES KING GEORGE VI and QUEEN ELIZABETH. SIR NOLL ASHBRIDGE, then Chief Engineer of the B B C, is on the plinth. In the group are LORD STYDON, Chairman of the Committee, and ISAAC SCHONBERG of the Marconi-E M I Company who made this relay possible



The Duke is easy-going, he has been known to leave his script to the last moment, yet has never appeared anxious or hurried; he is amazingly quick to analyse the position and is always prepared to do what he is asked provided there is a good reason for it. If it is suggested by the producer that he might move from A to B and the reason seems obscure, the Duke will not hesitate to make his own views clearly known. He is, in fact, in command of every situation, as one would always expect from the Royal Navy!

The Duke will only give a studio performance on rare and very special occasions. It must concern an organization in which he himself is deeply interested, such as at the National Playing Fields or an event of world importance of the standing of the International Geophysical Year. His performance in "The Restless Sphere" in July, 1957, gained him further distinction and endeared him to the world when he led into the wrong outside broadcast and was deeply apologetic. It was nearly three years before His Royal Highness appeared in a B.B.C. television studio again, this time to open a number of playing fields throughout Great Britain.

From time to time every member of the Royal Family is seen on the television screen. On 13 March 1958 televiwers saw the return of the Queen Mother from her tour of Australia and New Zealand, and the reception to her four days later at Guildhall. The departure of Princess Margaret for her Caribbean tour and her return were shown in the same year. On 1 March 1960 world interest was centred upon a television broadcast of the arrival of the Queen Mother, Princess Margaret and Mr Antony Armstrong-Jones at Covent Garden, the first occasion on which the Princess and her fiancé were seen together in public. Their wedding on 6 May was one of the greatest days in television history. The departure of the bride and bridegroom from Tower Pier aboard *Britannia* was the seventy-ninth Royal occasion to be produced by Antony Craxton. It was one he will never forget; nor will his praise ever be high enough to express his gratitude to the old master, Richard Dimbleby, who filled in almost for a solid hour awaiting the arrival of the Royal car, and although on the fringe of drying up and admitting defeat for the first time, he staved it off and maintained his distinguished reputation. "Never have so many owed so much to one man!"

The television cameras have captured a host of Royal and historical moments of pageantry and splendour. They have captured moments of moving simplicity; the occasional shots of Prince Charles and Princess Anne have made delightful studies. There was, at one time, a strong feeling in the country that it would contribute a more intimate family setting if the Queen were to have her children with her for the Christmas broadcast. Her Majesty, however, is most anxious that her children should be allowed to grow up as far as is possible in the way of other children. Once, when the Royal Producer was discussing the script of the Christmas message with the Queen, Prince Charles came into the room and sat quietly listening intently to all that was said. The Queen was perfectly happy to discuss so important a matter with one of her children with her, provided, as any good mannered little boy should do, he kept quiet. The Queen, anxious always to avoid any encroachment on her private life, has taken a great personal interest in television. She once asked a B.B.C. official where a particular camera had been sited after an outside broadcast of a Royal procession; she had, apparently, been unable to spot it.

Some of the elder statesmen at the B.B.C. believe that Royal interest and willingness to co-operate in television began in the foyer of Covent Garden in 1951 during the State visit of the President of France. King George VI and Queen Elizabeth were awaiting the President's arrival; traffic had delayed his car and for several minutes the television cameras were upon the King and Queen. A period of waiting is always an embarrassment; it could have been a difficult moment, but the King was in such tremendous form, an obvious mood of happiness shared by the Queen, that the broadcast was a big success. Commander Richard Colville, Press Secretary at Buckingham Palace, visited Alexandra Palace to see a tele-recording. It passed muster. Today tele-recordings are becoming the greatest history book ever produced. Television has played its part in making some of that history.

## CHAPTER IX: FIVE GREAT NAMES

*Great names of B.B.C. Television . . . Richard Dimbleby . . . Eric Robinson . . . Gilbert Harding . . . Tony Hancock . . . Eamonn Andrews.*

### RICHARD DIMBLEBY, C.B.E.

Sooner or later, of course, the viewers had to have their Oscars and it was the first *Daily Mail* Television award in 1949 which acknowledged the enormous popularity of Richard Dimbleby. His quality as an interviewer is easily assessed. When Dimbleby appears on the screen Everything is going to be All Right. He communicates (even if he doesn't feel it) relaxation. Continuity is smooth; he finds a connecting thread for each remark, rehearsed or not. He appears to be listening to everything that is being said—unlike the lesser of his kind who show only too clearly that their mind is filled with what to ask next.

His weight does not keep him off thin ice. There was the instance of Princess Margaret's friendship with Group Captain Peter Townsend. The Archbishop of Canterbury had considered this. It so happened that long-term planning took Richard Dimbleby into Lambeth Palace to interview the Archbishop just when the papers were full of the story. Would he dare to raise the matter? Would it be in good taste? He did dare and it was in good taste. The old "smoothie" had pulled it off again.

So said Frederick Lidstone writing in *Everybody's* —the old "smoothie" had done it again; how true—and how often he has done it again. How many other commentators could have filled in for a full hour and retained the viewer's interest, as Dimbleby had to do at Tower Bridge on the occasion of the marriage of Princess Margaret; or have faced with serenity—outwardly at least—the situation in Paris when he found himself in pitch darkness and on the air ready to describe a scene which he could not see. It happened on the occasion of

Her Majesty's State visit to Paris. She was at the Opera, a golden, glittering Parisian night. Dimbleby, inside the Opera-house, was to remain there and describe the Queen's departure from what he saw on a monitor screen fitted in a small room. Just as the Queen was leaving a power fault plunged his room into complete darkness—the microphone was live. Dimbleby was on the air, he could see nothing on a monitor screen. What should he do? He took the viewing public into his confidence and told them what had happened. He expressed the hope that from his miserable position he would be able to hear the cheering as the Queen came into the view of the waiting thousands. He was right, so from the eerie darkness he was able to announce that Her Majesty was stepping out into the night air. The Parisians tumultuous welcome told the rest of the story.

Dimbleby, as a commentator of National occasions, is unparalleled. What is his secret? Commanders in the field would call it "staff-work"; the B.B.C. officially refers to it as "Associate Material"; to Dimbleby it is simply "home-work". To the layman it is "preparation". When Dimbleby is to commentate on an event he takes enormous pains to brief himself on even the minutest detail connected with it. When he found himself with a full hour to while away whilst waiting for Princess Margaret and her husband to board *Britannia* on their wedding day, he needed every scrap of available material. Happily, he had taken the trouble to find the name of every ship in the vicinity, what cargo it was carrying, from whence it had come, and its next port of call. He had studied *Britannia* in every detail; he had armed himself with some calypso records to strike a topical note as the honeymoon was to be spent in the West Indies. Frantic telephone calls were being made to ascertain the exact position of the Royal car as the crowd waited and waited. Dimbleby and Producer, Antony Craxton, had very nearly come to the end of their tether; never has the B.B.C. had to close a programme because Richard Dimbleby has dried up; they have never been as near to it as they were on this occasion—but "Old Smoothie" pulled it off again, by hook or by crook.

Dimbleby, of course, is not without his critics. The press have called him pompous and unctuous, adjectives which no one who knows Richard Dimbleby well could possibly countenance. Admittedly, Dimbleby has been associated with pomp, but there is a cardinal

difference between pomp and pompous. One could scarcely imagine him painting the picture of a great National occasion with flippant remarks. Occasionally, he permits himself a little latitude. Once, when describing the Prime Minister at a function, he said "The Prime Minister is now taking a 'butchers' round the building." It was picked up by only one provincial newspaper. "Only Dimbleby could get away with it", remarked the correspondent—only Dimbleby could! Before leaving for Vienna to describe the visit of Mr Kruschev, Dimbleby asked the Austrian Embassy for full biographies of their leading diplomats. Never is it permissible to mention that Mr Kruschev is now talking to one of the Austrian diplomats. No self-respecting newspaper would allow such a caption. The diplomat must be named. If there is a delay in the arrival it might be necessary to describe the airport, and the types of aircraft there; to describe Vienna—once a city of laughter and music; to portray Kruschev as a man; his early life; his accomplishments; his mannerisms—the Russian habit of acknowledging applause by clapping one's self. All these things must be known to the commentator beforehand. Dimbleby is at best when ad-libbing; he is at his best when facing a challenge; he enjoys problems; life is too easy when it runs smooth. A fifteen-minute gap due to a technical hitch or because the star performer is late is never a matter of concern to him; he never fusses—his home-work gives him confidence as it does to a schoolboy who has swotted hard for an examination.

Dimbleby joined the B.B.C. as the first News Observer in 1936; then resigned in 1946 but has continued as a free-lance commentator. His first television broadcast in 1938 was done quite by accident. He was commentating for sound radio on the return of Neville Chamberlain from Munich. Freddie Grisewood was handling television, but for a brief period television took the sound commentary. Dimbleby thus began a distinguished television career. He had by then already made an impact on sound radio and continues to do so. He has seen the swing of the pendulum. Television, in its early days, was the butt of the people in sound radio, who asked disparagingly "How is the magic lantern?" Now, the vast army of television employees joke about "steam" radio, as being the junior boy or the aged grandmother. "Twenty Questions" on sound radio; "Panorama" on television; flowering evergreens never wavering in popularity with Dimbleby

at the helm. During the Suez crisis the whole country turned to "Panorama"; the window on the world—a frank, searching, and authoritative window which mirrored world tension at that nerve-racking time. "Panorama" does not reach down to a mass audience. It credits the mass viewer with intelligence. It is watched by all classes of the community. Dimbleby often uses remarks by taxi drivers as a popularity barometer. Frequently the conversation is begun with "I didn't think much of that bloke you had on 'Panorama' on Monday night talking about so and so." He is the basis for a discussion, often quite an enlightening one. Contrary to what some of his critics may think, Dimbleby has a wide sense of humour, and no one enjoyed "Panorama's" little joke on April Fool's Day more than he did; a film was shown of spaghetti growing on trees in Switzerland. Dimbleby did a dead-pan commentary to give the thing an air of authenticity. The Italians loved it. The department in the B.B.C. which has to deal with viewers' correspondence did not! They received something in the region of a couple of thousand letters. Thankfully for them April Fool's Day does not often fall on a Monday ("Panorama" night) and spaghetti does not often grow on trees!

Dimbleby's diverse business interests permit him the barest leisure time. He seldom goes to bed before one o'clock. He is called precisely at seven thirty and rises as fresh as a daisy to face a new day; horse riding is his only athletic pursuit. He drinks little—but smokes continuously. He is a brilliant conversationalist; is modest enough to hate turning down any broadcast in case the replacement does the job better. He has no illusions about himself. He has lived forty-eight crowded years. *The Spanish Civil War; war-time despatches, from the Middle East, Asia Minor, East Africa, Burma, Germany, France and Belgium.* At least twenty Operations with Bomber Command including the first mass raid over Berlin. The first Eurovision transmission from France in 1950; one big National event after another including two general elections—both marathon feats; the second one involved twenty-two continuous hours—a television record; sandwiches and orange-juice represented a day's sustenance for Dimbleby and his colleagues.

Richard Dimbleby, awarded the O.B.E. in the 1946 Birthday Honours and the C.B.E. in the 1959 Birthday Honours List, is married

with four children—three sons and a daughter. His wife, Dilys, and the family have been seen on television in a series of holiday programmes. "Old Smoothie"—"Mr Big Occasion"—whichever you will, Dimbleby is one of television's "Greats".

★ ★ ★

### ERIC ROBINSON

Somewhere in his archives is to be found the first contract which Eric Robinson ever signed for a television appearance. Its value, in hard cash, was £9 10s od a week; that was in 1936. Now, television has brought him to the absolute pinnacle of success. Not once, but at least half a dozen times in recent years a taxi driver has refused to take the fare at the end of a journey. Each man has welcomed the opportunity of being able to say "Thank you" for all the pleasure which Eric Robinson and his musicians have given to television audiences. These free rides have become an embarrassment; they are, however, a reflected glory. Television has brought a new conception to music in terms of presentation. The conductor must now be a personality; he must be capable of putting himself over as well as his music. It has been said that a dialect is a helpful asset along the road to the top. Eamonn Andrews—Irish. Wilfred Pickles—Yorkshire. John Arlott—West Country. Kenneth McKellar—Scottish. John Snagge—the perfection of what is sometimes called the Oxford accent. But for Eric Robinson a world-wide popularity has been achieved because the viewers of all denominations have come to regard him as one of them; a chap they might easily meet in a pub.

This is exactly as the habitués of the "New Inn", tucked away behind Lord's Cricket Ground, have come to know him. Mine host always keeps a bottle of wine on ice for him; Eric Robinson is a connoisseur of fine wines, and over a glass of wine he will tell you how he began as a fiddle player in the television orchestra in 1936, and how, at Alexandra Palace, the orchestra used all their leisure time playing table tennis and he became a player almost in the Victor Barna class. Before television Eric Robinson had joined the B.B.C. Orchestra (Sound) in 1931, at a time when it was almost unique because of its "no deputy" clause. This provided that no player might ever be absent except in case of illness

or accident. Apparently, the practice of sending along a deputy had grown steadily in some quite famous orchestras and was seriously abused. Good players doubled their salaries by carefully choosing their engagements, keeping two or three less enterprising players on hand to deputize. There is one now legendary story about a visiting conductor from abroad who kept on finding deputies at rehearsals. When it came to the final rehearsal he noticed that only one solitary member of the orchestra, a flautist, had attended every session. In front of the whole company the visiting conductor thanked the man for his enthusiasm in not missing a single rehearsal. The flautist acknowledged the praise but added: "It is a great pity that I shall not be here for the concert!"

It was after the war that Eric Robinson began the climb to the top; versatility had always been his principal virtue. He has no favourite piece of music. "It would be impossible to do my job properly if I had," he says. "I have learned to love Gershwin just as much as Puccini." This broad approach has stemmed from the experience of multifarious activities. He has conducted a string orchestra in *La Serva Padrona*; he has conducted the orchestra in the "Donald Peers" series; "It's Magic"; "Music For You" (his own title and his greatest success); *Swan Lake*; "This is Your Life"; "Ask Pickles"; "The Dave King Show"; "The Charlie Chester Show"; "The Norman Wisdom Show"; "Vera Lynn Sings"; he was Music Director with Bill McGuffie for the Festival of Britain popular songs in 1957; "The Winifred Atwell Show"; "The Night and the Music"; "Make Mine Music"; he conducted a section of the Royal Choral Society and the Concert Orchestra in "Riverside One"; and so it goes on. Eric Robinson is music. Looking back, he recalls Richard Tauber as the greatest artiste with whom he has had the pleasure and distinction of working. Tauber was capable of stopping in the middle of a rehearsal to chastise one of the oboe players for a slight misdemeanour in his playing; he was always right. When he conducted *Gay Rosalinda* the cast would come into the wings to listen to the overture. "Musicians who can accompany are born and not made" Tauber used to say. Countless artistes have since been grateful that Eric Robinson was born to accompany. There was the occasion when a famous pop singer had mistaken where he should come in. The orchestra was ready; the pop singer was not, so the whole orchestra improvised without a signal from the conductor.

so as not to make the error obvious to the audience and to give the singer the chance to pick up the threads again. To the audience, possibly, the accompanying orchestra is of secondary and almost trivial importance. To the artiste it can be the difference between success and failure. "With your orchestra, Eric, we feel everything is going to be all right," they say. The Russian State Variety Company and Perry Como were high in their praise.

Versatility and improvisation were sometimes coupled with speed in the happy bygone days of "Ally Pally" in its tiny studios. Once, during the presentation of *Dick Whittington*, the band moved completely with all their instruments during the show from Studio B to A, back to B, and then once more to A. The sight of a bass player and a tympanist rushing down a narrow corridor with the tools of their trade brandished high above their heads would have been good meat for a Saturday night show. On another occasion Bill Ward was presenting a show in Studio A when shortly before transmission a breakdown occurred and the engineers estimated that it would take an hour to put things right. Within a matter of minutes the show had been changed to the other studio. Artistes carried scenery, musicians shifted the music-stands and piano; everyone did something; the show went out on time.

Technical developments have now reached such a peak that Eric Robinson and his orchestra have often accompanied artistes who have been performing in another studio. A critic once described him as having six heads—a "multi-eyed octopus". The fan-mail for "Music For You" is heavy. One letter, which will always be treasured, came from a Manchester man. "I thought you would like to know," he wrote, "that my wife, who is stone deaf, went to our grandson's home and saw Joan Hammond in your programme. Although she could not hear, she was able to lip-read Miss Hammond's rendering of 'Oh My Beloved Daddy'—and she sang with her. You may imagine what a wonderful memory this was for her. Until a bomb accident destroyed her hearing she was a professional singer and regarded Miss Hammond's singing as the perfection she would like to attain." In 1952 Eric Robinson won the Television Society's Silver Medal—for consistently high standard of performance. "Music For You" has featured a glittering array of the world's greatest names of music even including

Gigli. "Music For You" has been produced for the past seven years by one of television's very few women producers—Patricia Foy. The son of an Italian cobbler it was his mother who taught Gigli to sing at the age of 5. Before he was 12 he was washing dishes in a nobleman's castle, and was already drawing crowds to the little church near Recanati where he sang in the choir as a boy soprano.

Eric Robinson was bred in a family rich in musical traditions. His brother, Stanford, achieved universal renown. Once, Stanford was the great name. Now, through the medium of television, the status of the Robinson brothers has tended to reverse itself. Eric has become a household name. He has almost forgotten that he is Mr Robinson. The butcher, the baker, the candle-stick maker, in fact the world at large (or small) call him "Eric". He is just one of us; he likes people, and that probably is one of the fundamental reasons for his popularity. He loves flowers, especially roses, and it is never the right thing to do when visiting his home to tell him that you have seen bigger blooms than he has grown; not that you could do so, in all conscience, judging by the magnificent quality of his own home-grown roses.

Musicians—with the notable exception of Paderewski—make poor politicians. Eric Robinson confines his activities to music, but if he now decided to pursue a parliamentary career for whatever party, he would undoubtedly receive public acclaim at the polls. Slightly out of breath after a fast musical number, a little hesitant, perhaps, as to what he will say next, Eric Robinson with his love of people has that delightful air of sincerity and simplicity. He has, of course, one almost forgets to mention, an infinite knowledge of his subject and a unique flair for its presentation. When you hear: "Conducted by Eric Robinson" it is a guaranteed trade-mark; a brand name of quality in entertainment.

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#### GILBERT HARDING

Gilbert Harding is dead. The news profoundly shocked a nation on the evening of 16 November 1960. Already, an edition of "What's My Line?" had been recorded for transmission on the following Sunday. Instead, the B.B.C. paid tribute to a remarkable man, a man whom Sir Compton Mackenzie described as the greatest raconteur

of our time. "His memory will live," said Sir Compton, "as a great talker, and I would like to think of him now walking arm in arm with Dr Johnson." Selwyn Lloyd, Chancellor of the Exchequer, a contemporary at Cambridge, referred to Gilbert Harding as "that unrestrained torrent of words". He was a rather complicated person but we have lost a lovable and unique personality. It was of Gilbert Harding that Winston Churchill once asked during the war "Where is that man with the succinct mind?" Gilbert Harding reached the pinnacle of success, yet he never really enjoyed it and once admitted that the most cheerful thing he found about living was that every day was one day less. In a "Face to Face" programme which aroused certain controversy he said "I am afraid of dying. I should be very glad to be dead but I don't look forward to the actual process of dying." He died outside Broadcasting House after a rehearsal of "Round Britain Quiz" of which he was the regular quiz-master. He was crossing the pavement to his chauffeur-driven car when he collapsed. The chauffeur immediately went to his assistance with oxygen, which was always kept in the boot of the car because of Gilbert's asthma. It was too late. The man who either loved or hated people, and was built of paradoxes, was dead.

A national figure and a household name, yet fundamentally shy and insecure except in his religious faith, Gilbert Harding was, perhaps, two men; immensely kind, gallant, a great wit who loved to be with children, yet liable to explode without warning, intolerant and even insufferable. Public opinion inclined to the view that his angry self was a mere creation especially for television; his stock-in-trade, as it were. This was emphatically not so.

Just how much these moods and tantrums were prompted by ill health which plagued him savagely for nine years will never be known. Gilbert himself said that he got annoyed because no matter how he tried he was never able to pretend. If he felt like exploding then he would explode. "I cannot act", he would say, and in these words lie a hidden facet of his ambition. He would have liked to have become an actor; he had played a number of Shakespearian parts at school.

I shall remember Gilbert Harding with affection and admiration. I think of him now one August day in 1960 as the morning sunlight streamed into the lounge of his London flat and we sat and talked

quietly for an hour and a half; to be in his company was an invigorating experience. It was ten o'clock and he had not long finished shaving; after a good night's sleep he said he felt pretty well. I was intrigued by a photograph standing on a table of one of the world's most beautiful women—the alluring Dietrich. I asked him about her. "Marlene is an old friend," he replied, "she has been to some of my parties." We came to the subject of being rude. "Rudeness," he said quietly, "yes of course I have been rude. I was rude impulsively—not in search of publicity. But," he hastened to add, "I think I have mellowed over the years. I am much more patient now because I have come to realize that other people have been patient with me."

Harding's life had taken him through many diverse highways and byways. "I hate being bored," he confessed, "and I have a horror of becoming a bore myself."

From Wolverhampton Royal School, Gilbert Harding went up to Queens' College, Cambridge, and read History and Modern Languages. He studied to become an Anglican clergyman; then gave up his studies and was received into the Roman Catholic Church. As a tutor in English he went to Canada in 1931 and to France in 1932; returning from France he became a member of the Bradford City Police Force, but a broken knee compelled him to abandon this in 1933. The next assignment was overseas again; this time to Cyprus as Correspondent of *The Times*. Then home again to read for the Bar, and finally, on 14 December 1939, he joined the staff of the B.B.C. as a sub-editor in the editorial unit of the Monitoring Service. By February, 1940, he had become Supervisor of the Information Bureau of the Monitoring Service; then note-writing editor; then he was appointed Assistant in the Outside Broadcasting Department and did several commentaries including the changing of the guard outside Buckingham Palace during Army week in March, 1943. In July, 1944, he became Assistant to the Canadian Office in Toronto, returning to London again in 1947. On 24 March 1948 he resigned from the B.B.C. to become a freelance broadcaster. Here was a permanent niche, at last.

He won a place of distinction in sound and television broadcasting as a man who was never afraid to speak his mind; frequently his mind produced the soundest philosophy. He would not be above describing the Royal Academy as a collection of squalid rubbish. Sometimes one

began to suspect that the genial shade of another Gilbert, a great debater and lover of paradox—Gilbert Keith Chesterton—hovered behind his chair and applauded this blend of belligerent benevolence. Perhaps, too, there was a liberal sprinkling of W. S. Gilbert in his character; Gilbertian wit and the love of satire and common sense might, perhaps, have inspired Gilbert Harding to write the words for the *Mikado* or *Yeomen of the Guard*.

“I hate anything I cannot understand,” he told me.

I love paintings but purely for their pleasing appearance, and I only buy the work of living artists who need the money. An old master can mean little to me except as a piece of merchandise to trade and make a profit. I like good music, but it must not be so highbrow that it is above my understanding. Provided it is not too noisy I find modern music quite exciting. Music, like painting, is either good or bad, no matter who wrote it or when.

His hobbies were reading and watching television. He would read anything with few exceptions. Thrillers were definitely out; so was space fiction or anything politically charged. As a television viewer he had an insatiable appetite for Westerns; he never tired of them and rarely missed any Western worth its salt. A member of Sussex County Cricket Club, Gilbert rarely visited cricket grounds but enjoyed the game on television where, he said, you get a much better view than from the edge of the boundary.

As we talked, “What’s My Line?” was due to come back for yet another extended run. “Are you utterly sick and tired of it?” I asked him. “No, I’m not . . . I never tire of it. It’s not hard work . . . there is no script to learn, no rehearsal. I am just sorry for the producer who has to keep finding challengers who not only have an interesting and unusual job but who have some personality as well. The challengers can make or mar the show. Many of them, the life and soul of the party, according to their friends, are reduced to a bag of nerves in front of the camera.” A man with a wooden leg who played rugby was the challenger who stood out most in Harding’s mind. Why is “What’s My Line?” so popular? “Because,” he said, “the public enjoy knowing the answer as they watch the panel sometimes groping for a long lost cause. They enjoy it because there are no prizes other than a piece of paper certifying a triumph over the panel, and they enjoy the uncer-

tainty of who will be the guest celebrity." The press have killed the programme stone dead many times, but it is still as alive as ever.

I asked him if he had any particular ambition in connexion with television programmes—he had—it was to take a camera round England photographing the places he liked, and telling the viewers why he liked them. He longed to go back to the Black Country, the scene of his boyhood, to Hereford, his birthplace, and to Durham, a place that held nostalgic memories. Why had he never done it? There were two reasons—opportunity and ill health. When the opportunity was there his health was not strong enough; by the time he felt better the opportunity had slipped away.

Throughout a full life he had met great men and women of all denominations. I asked him to name the man whom he regarded with greatest admiration. His answer was Bertrand Russell. The most outstanding woman was Edith Sitwell; "But," he was swift to add, "there are several others who would come to mind if you allowed me to ponder a little longer."

Gilbert Harding's home was at Brighton where his greatest joy was to go out in an open car in the early hours of the morning before the world was awake. He had an inherent love of peace, far from the milling crowds. He used his London flat little more than once a week. He loved poetry and often read it aloud; he had, in fact, composed verse himself, but alas, it had never seen the light of day.

Of modern education, Harding said it tends to disseminate illiteracy. "I am appalled," he said, "at the number of programmes in which people are asked simple questions on general knowledge and make a complete mess of them."

What was the power behind the name of Gilbert Harding? Perhaps it can be gauged from an appeal he made one Christmas in his column in the *People* asking readers to send him half-a-crown, naming five of ten charities who were to receive 6d of it. The result was £30,000. Mr Harding was a bachelor yet he was at his most courteous best when in the presence of women; he could be most gallant. Gilbert Harding, provocative, intelligent, so versatile that his programmes varied from "Housewives' Choice" to the "Brains Trust", from "Twenty Questions" to "Woman's Hour", from "Round Britain Quiz" to "Barker's Folly", had fought with courage this permanent battle

against declining health. One evening when "What's My Line?" gave a live performance and then recorded a second one immediately afterwards, to be transmitted at a later date, Gilbert was positively exhausted at the end of the evening, sweltering under the heat of the lights. He still attended the "after the show" party with the challengers and expounded his vast knowledge of Oscar Wilde to Peter Finch, a celebrity. Finch at that time was shooting the *Oscar Wilde* film—or one of them! Harding was an institution. As such he will never be replaced. We have, indeed, lost a lovable and unique personality.

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### TONY HANCOCK

Anthony Aloysius St John Hancock, the longest and the biggest name in British Light Entertainment. A character actor, a comedian with a profound sense of the ludicrous; a clown's sense of pathos; a frustrated man trying to get on with all the powers of evil working against him; able to create a situation easily, and able to make the world at large see themselves in his characterizations. "Home win, home win, home win" chants the infuriating James as poor frustrated Hancock is going through the Saturday night ritual of checking his football pools. Funny men, from the rough and tumble days of the old music-halls, usually create a decisive impression, they are either liked or loathed. You rush to the set to switch "Bilko" off in three seconds dead, or you love him. With Hancock it is different. Few people dislike him intensely. His viewing audience is made up of 80 per cent of true Hancock fans, and 20 per cent who think he is better than a lot of things on television. I asked Mr Hancock why he thought this was so. "If it is true," he replied, "and I like to think that people don't dislike me, it is possibly because if they hate me then they must hate themselves, because I am trying to play, to breathe and to speak, people as they are. The disappointment in checking the coupon with a smart 'Alec' gloating over a failure. 'Why on earth did you give the Arsenal to win, it was obvious they wouldn't.' It is always obvious after the event. The long-lost Army pals who reunite after fifteen years—what a party this'll be—but the high spirited lads of fifteen years back who once had a different A.T.S. girl every night, the life and soul of the party, have been drawn

into the net of humdrum life; their high spirits squeezed from them by the same train night and morning, and the washing-up cloth. Can you imagine old Charlie doing the washing up—you can't, but the fact remains that Charlie does now."

Hancock is great for three reasons. The first and foremost is Hancock, and bracketed second are the names of Alan Simpson and Ray Galton, two script-writers with but a single thought—Hancock. The three first met in 1951 and found they all had a sense of humour which ran on parallel lines. Tony Hancock began at the bottom; he began with the usual trimmings and gimmicks—the hat on the back of the head, the white and tan shoes, and one foot over the footlights. There was a time in later years when he felt lost on the stage without a hat, but great men before him have depended on trimmings for early success. Chaplin wore a bowler hat and carried a cane; Chevalier wore tight pants and a boater, but time develops a strength of personality which outgrows the gimmicks; a great artiste is great in himself—so it is with Hancock—he could sit at the same table with Sidney James for half an hour and produce a screamingly funny show. In 1958, 5,750,000 people would have been watching that show. By 1960 the figure had rocketed to 12,000,000 and twice topped the 13,000,000 mark. "Are you conscious," I asked him, "of the size of your vast audience, who expect nothing but the best?" "Am I conscious of it," he said without a moment's hesitation, "it worries me every minute of the day. . . ." It is a hard and rocky road to the top—it is equally hard when you have got there. Tony Hancock rations his appearances on television; he has no intention of squeezing the last drop of blood out of two brilliant script-writers who have helped take him to the top and sustain him there. When he was asked to make a film he agreed on one condition—that Simpson and Galton should write it; the result was *The Rebel*. I first met the two writers on the set at the Studios at Boreham Wood when scenes for *The Rebel* were being shot. Both were in attendance every day just in case an alteration was needed to the script. Tony Hancock was revelling in film technique where any mistake can be instantly cut and the scene re-shot. "No such luck in live television," he said, and recalled one of his live television shows in which there was a house on the end of a runway due to be demolished. As Hancock sat playing an instrument, a surveyor was to



Natural History programmes produced by the BBC's unit at Bristol have achieved enormous popularity. Four people who have contributed to that popularity are HANS HASS, MICHAELA DENIS, LOTTE HASS and ARMAND DENIS, brought together in this picture on "Party Night" to celebrate the first programme from the new Television Centre.

Television's most popular panel game—"What's My Line?", born 16 July 1951 and still flourishing despite repeated suggestions by the critics that it was finished long ago. This panel is DAVID NIXON, ISOBEL BARNETT, BARBARA KELLY and GILBERT HARDING, a picture taken in 1954.





#### A MICROPHONE BOOM

Showing the mechanism for taking up the surplus microphone cable as the length of the boom is varied

#### THE RADIO CAMERA

PETER DIMMOCK, Head of Television Outside Broadcasts looking at the radio camera in 1957, which together with the radio microphone already developed by B.B.C. engineers enabled outside broadcasts to achieve greater mobility in the field.



come and start pulling the place down beginning with the fireplace. The set had been specially built so that this could be done easily—but it was done so well that it all fell down just before the surveyor arrived. His face was a character study when he came in and looked over towards the fireplace he was to rip out, it was already lying on the floor. The dialogue fitted in with his dismantling process—but there was no dismantling to do, other people's cues depended on what the surveyor said and when he said it, this was live television at its nerve-racking worst. The camera-men working to a camera script, were left high and dry and just took pot luck; so did the actors. They shambled through it, so they said, and not one of them died! How different from muffing his lines in a scene with Irene Handl for *The Rebel* when Mr Hancock merely exclaimed with the rich eloquence that is so instinctively his, "Oh Gor Blimey, I'm sorry." This was Hancock the man—the man who plays one of us because he is one of us. The informality of an aperitif in his dressing room with the script-writers sitting on the bed; the producer on his haunches on the floor, Mrs Hancock arranging the flowers and Mr Hancock dispensing the drinks, was a momentary and refreshing glimpse of the great man off duty; away from a world that has made him, but which sometimes embarrasses him. He and his wife once cut short a holiday in the West Country because the world at large wanted to shake him by the hand, or guess aloud whether it was him or not.

The world, too, is always having ideas for his programmes but Tony Hancock narrows the channel open to his script-writers by flatly refusing to do anything which has been done before. He will not do a golf sketch because Sid Fields did one; nor a car sketch because of Harry Tate. If he finds a joke which might have been new to his script-writers but he has heard before, he will have it taken out of the script. How are ideas born? Sometimes a lunch with good wine to sharpen the wit produces nothing at the table; but the germ of an idea has been planted and may begin to develop an hour or two later. Once, for instance, Hancock did a show which centred upon the living room of a house on a Sunday afternoon; the cinemas were shut; the pubs were shut—it was raining—everybody was bored to tears. The programme was a big success and so, months later at a script discussion, someone suggested another "boredom" theme; how do people get

bored? What about a long train journey? That was it. Boredom scored a second hit. Never do Tony Hancock or his writers go about looking for people and situations, but having created a situation for themselves they may well think of real characters who have crossed their paths in the past—a certain bus conductor or a waitress in a café, “sausage and beans—sausage and mash—or just sausage”.

Script-writing must always be the life-blood of television, a monster which devours ideas at an alarming rate. It demands writers whose flow of ideas is kept constant, never flagging in standard of performance, as if a modern machine was generating them. The part which Simpson and Galton play in this happy triumvirate is thus clearly seen.

In 1960, Tony Hancock decided to part company with his old sparring partner, Sid James, the admirable foil, who had contributed so much to the Hancock programmes. There was no disagreement nor had James any real desire to feature in a show of his own. Tony Hancock merely felt that his own field of operations was being reduced in scope because a part always had to be written for Sid James; the trend of the programme thus always had a certain similarity, and he felt it was time for his self-expression to be given its head. It was better, too, to part at the top of the tree before the public began to yearn for a different conception. They parted the best of friends; in fact Alan Simpson and Ray Galton undertook to handle the script for the “Sid James Show”. Hancock and James had become almost a Gilbert and Sullivan, a Laurel and Hardy, a Flanagan and Allen. It was thought better to go their different ways before one became entirely dependent upon the other.

It was in the “Archie Andrews Show” that Hancock coined a phrase which represented the first rung of the ladder—“Those flippin’ kids”. He first broadcast in 1949 in “Variety Bandbox” in which he made regular appearances. The first “Hancock’s Half-Hour” series was first broadcast in 1954 and first televised in 1956. Throughout the various series on television Hancock has kept what he calls “his little repertory company” around him. The little chap who played the goal-keeper in the football match; the toughie who resembles a retired boxer; the chap who fits so well into the part of a librarian or a clerk. Sometimes, unwittingly, a piece of satire can have its effect on real life.

Once, in a baby-sitter sketch, Hancock experienced considerable difficulty in getting up out of a high contemporary chair. The makers of the chair were soon tearing their hair out, for after seeing Hancock's predicament people were cancelling orders for the chairs as fast as the telephone bell would ring!

When Irene Handl answered a knock at the door in *The Rebel* and shouted "My Gawd, it's *him* . . . fancy coming all this way to see me . . . didn't I tell you he was a lovely boy", she had painted a word-picture of the big boy of British Light Entertainment. *Him*—Mr Hancock, was a lovely boy to television's millions. He was, perhaps, a modern Bransby Williams, probing deeper into life itself looking for life itself, and when he has found it, he has superimposed his own character upon it and transmitted it back through the medium of a television screen. Whether as a disappointed pools forecaster, a baby-sitter scarcely competent for the job, or a sufferer from an ordinary common or garden cold, Hancock always succeeds in conveying a tremendous depth of reality and a rich and intelligent sense of humour, which endear him to the masses. What viewer, when opening the door and finding Hancock on the step, could fail to say "My Gawd, it's *him*." *Him*—Mr Hancock, is that sort of fellow. May he and his two Knights of the Realm—Simpson and Galton—reign for many a long year, so that the world can laugh with them.

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### EAMONN ANDREWS

A hankering for prestige which he has not only established but admirably sustained, uncanny sense of rightness of how to deal with a situation when it arises, an adaptability which makes him just as much at home with children as at the ring-side of a World Championship fight, the belief in sincerity, a warm and friendly personality and, of course, considerable skill have, when agreeably blended, produced a fairy story in the life of Eamonn Andrews—a story of a young boxing commentator who left Ireland to seek fame and fortune and returned triumphantly to his native Dublin as Chairman of the Irish Television Authority—an executive position demanding technical knowledge of

television, the vision so essential to a planner, and an administrative ability at the top level.

Eamonn Andrews, like Richard Dimbleby, is the master of a big occasion; who else could carry "This is Your Life" with such confidence and undisturbed continuity. The fact that at the end of the programme he is too exhausted to do anything but go straight home and unwind is never faintly visible in the standard of his performance. Even to Eamonn Andrews, "This is Your Life" imposes considerable mental strain. Here is a case in point. On the Thursday before Group Captain Cheshire's life was to be told on the following Monday, Cheshire was on the Continent. He was expected back in England on the Saturday and although his wife shared the secret with the B.B.C., supposing Cheshire had decided to stay for a few more days. What excuse could his wife have produced for insisting that he returned to England? "Supposing he doesn't come?" I asked. "I just have to convince myself that he will." "Have you had any doubts," I asked, "when you are face to face with the celebrity that he will refuse to come on the stage?" Eamonn replied firmly, "I never allow myself to have any doubts, if you let a dog see you are frightened it will bite you. I never let the subject imagine that any doubt exists. He has arrived and the show goes on." This now famous Irishman was, after all, a boxer; he can be tough if necessary; only a fellow Irishman has defied him!

There was a time when the compere of "This is Your Life" spent Monday morning going over the script for the evening's programme until he realized that the complete answer to a top performance in the B.B.C.s most difficult show was relaxation on Monday morning, and so he is often to be found now on the golf course. This, to many a harassed business-man, sounds a dream way of beginning the week, but few of those business-men get through more work during the remaining six and a half days. Eamonn is at the Television Theatre at two o'clock on Monday and the show is rehearsed without the principal and possibly without the principal's wife, three times; a last minute tidying up of the script has to be done; perhaps a man with only a few words to say is found to be quite a personality; the key witness on the other hand might be reticent and not too good a speaker. The personality is thus given a bigger part. On one occasion, the wife of the subject said something entirely different at all three rehearsals. It was

anybody's guess what she would say when it came to the vital moment. It has been Eamonn's practice over the years to put in an appearance at the party afterwards, but only for a short time. "This is your life," he says, "your friends, and your party, I'll leave it to you." Then he slips quietly away, one more nerve-racking Monday evening is over.

Tuesday morning is usually set aside for correspondence and for office routine; in the afternoon Eamonn receives Leslie Jackson for the inquest on the previous evening, and for the preliminary discussion on next week's "This is Your Life" script. On alternate Wednesdays he is in Dublin; when he is in England, on a Wednesday, it is usually a day for a conference with Johnny Downes, Producer of Children's Programmes. Thursday is the day for "Crackerjack" or "Playbox", and the time to write the weekly newspaper column. Friday is the final brush up with "Jacko" on the following Monday's show. Saturday is a packed day of sound broadcasting—"Sports Parade" at 12.45 p.m., "Sports Report" at 5 p.m. and "Sports Review", an overseas sporting programme, at 7.30 p.m. He leaves home at nine on Saturday morning to set about a twelve hour stint—and Sunday, the day of rest, is "What's My Line?"! How can the human frame stand the pace? Largely, in the case of Eamonn Andrews, because he refuses to appear on television in May, June, July or August. Admittedly, part of the time is taken up by a business trip to America and part to Ireland in the interests of Irish Television; he might be in Rome for the Olympics, but in between the globe-trotting he does manage a liberal holiday with his delightful wife who, as Grainne Bourke, from Dublin's fair city, he had married in November, 1951. Eamonn Andrews is well conscious of the line of thought which insists that a star, however much loved, can appear too much before the public. This barometer of success he watches carefully. In his case, however, the extensive variety of his roles minimizes the possibility of the public tiring of him—sport, children's programmes, and the two top shows. It is, at the same time, a sheet anchor to be an expert in something, it could be stamps or butterflies; in Eamonn's case it was originally boxing. When, still at school, he became All Ireland Juvenile Boxing Champion, Eamonn decided he was an expert; more important still he was able to convince the Irish broadcasting authorities that he was, and so came his first commentary in 1939; the bottom rung of the ladder, the stairway to the stars. The young

Irishman hitched his wagon high, and has never relented in pursuit of it.

On leaving school, he started work as an insurance clerk; this very soon clashed with his radio activities and went by the board; he resigned in 1945. He then became a radio columnist for the *Irish Independent* as well as continuing to broadcast commentaries and interviews with celebrities. His series called "Microphone Parade" created a record by running without a break for almost three years. This was interrupted in 1949 by a stage tour of England with the "Joe Loss Band Show" in which he was the central figure of a "Double or Nothing" quiz. In 1950, Eamonn came to London for a B.B.C. audition when the Corporation was seeking a replacement for Stewart Macpherson as quiz-master of "Ignorance is Bliss". Eamonn Andrews got the job, the quick-fire Macpherson was replaced by a man destined for the top. Soon his net was cast in all directions—"Sports Report", "A Book at Bedtime", Boxing Commentaries, "Housewives' Choice". In July, 1951, he took the chair of a new panel game, "What's My Line?" I had the pleasure in September, 1960, of attending the opening of yet another series of this much maligned show which never seems to waver in popularity. We drank its health together. In September, 1955, Eamonn Andrews and "This is Your Life" began their long life together. The element of shock was created for him from the word "Go"—the first life was his! At least it equipped him with the knowledge of just how other people feel when they are going through the mill. Belief in a script is always half-way towards success. Jack Benny appearing once at the Radio Show took infinite pains with a short script before each show. "Surely," said Eamonn Andrews, "a comedian in your class can ad-lib without a script." The great Benny replied "None of us is good enough to ad-lib." Benny went on the stage and fluffed his lines, he paused for a moment and then said "That'll teach me to associate with Val Parnell." It got the biggest laugh in the show. When he came off Eamonn teased him saying "I thought you never ad-libbed, that line about Val Parnell was the best in the act." "That was no ad-libbing," smiled Benny, "I first used it at the Palace in 1925. I just slip in whichever name suits the place!"

There are few more popular personalities on B.B.C. television than Eamonn Andrews. His presence on a programme is a great staff of comfort to the producer, and as one high official said in praise of

him: "You can always talk to Eamonn off the record." He always appreciates the other man's problem and his point of view, he will go to untold lengths to ensure perfection, and so he is a firm critic of himself or the programme. When "What's My Line?" came back in 1960 one old custom had gone; the mime had been dropped. Maurice Winnick, whose show it is, and Cecil Madden, Assistant Controller of B.B.C. Television, were united in believing that it had speeded up the show. Eamonn felt in his heart that the public would miss their old friend, the mime was always fun. He made known his views without suggesting that anyone else was wrong—everybody was left to sleep on it. What Eamonn says is always respected at the very highest level in B.B.C. policy.

"This is Your Life" can be most invigorating. From the vast number of brave men and women and world personalities Eamonn remembers two outstandingly. Madame Anne Brusselmans, the "This is Your Life" show with the highest rating and "Matty", the indefatigable A. E. Matthews.

It is hoped that Irish Television will begin transmission towards the end of 1961 from its 23-acre site just outside Dublin. As Chairman, it is most unlikely that Eamonn Andrews will appear on the screen. Its success, however, will be a fulfilment of the confidence placed in Eamonn Andrews to shape, develop and present television to the people of his beloved and native Ireland with the polish which he himself has brought to the British television screen. His activities in Ireland have had the full blessing of the B.B.C. who are swift to realize the value of Eamonn Andrews in the field of promotion. His active and creative brain could shape him easily into a "tycoon", yet it would be a "tycoon" with a difference, one never losing the human touch or an understanding of people and of life. These virtues I believe to be undeniably a part of his make-up. One September day, over coffee, in his flat in Lancaster Gate I felt I was able to probe quite deeply into the character of Eamonn Andrews—his success, when you have done this, is incomparably easy to understand.

## CHAPTER X: DRAMA

*Michael Barry has a shot at Television and becomes Head of Drama . . . the writers who perfected the art of working for Television . . . B.B.C. televises 250 plays a year . . . John Jacobs does a production.*

“**W**HY don’t you have a shot at this thing they call television?” This challenging question was put by Greer Garson to Michael Barry in a small Repertory theatre in Croydon in 1938. Barry had never seen the thing they called television and slipped in to a multiple store nearby to have a look. It was worth a “go”. Today, alas, like so many of its contemporaries, the Repertory theatre is no more but Barry is Head of B.B.C. Television Drama, the architect of an impressive structure which has won for itself a unique reputation. Drama has clearly changed the character of an English Sunday evening. A Minister once said that whilst television had not materially affected the size of congregations at Evensong it was imperative for the preacher to end his sermon so that his parishioners could be in their armchairs at home for the start of the play.

Michael Barry produced his first work for television on Easter Sunday, 1938, when he did *St Bernard*. He found then that the camera had a narrow field of focus, the long column of pilgrims showed him that it was inadvisable to hold moving figures for too long, but it was here, in some strange and unrelated way, that Barry began to sense that the machine about which he knew so little, did have an imagination of its own. Once he had wondered whether he had done the right thing in leaving “Rep”; had he given up a heritage? *St Bernard* convinced him that television did have a quality of individualism—a specific characteristic, not perhaps clearly definable at the time, but existing none the less.

Television had no tradition then; its material was taken principally



Production Assistant FADDY RUSSELL IS IN COSTUME FOR RUDOLF CARTIER'S production of *A Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens. This would enable her if necessary to mingle in the crowd scenes were any instructions necessary and also in case a wide sweep of the camera caught her in vision. The Associate Conductor is also in costume. In the background is the 5 min. —ELTER FRANCIS GREEN

When LARTHA KITT appeared in *Mr. Panter* on 11 June 1956 a critic wrote: 'Although Broadway gave LARTHA KITT her first big chance as an actress in the play *Mr. Panter*, she had to come to London and face the B.B.C. cameras to convey the full flavour of her remarkable talent.' LARTHA KITT is FIDDY WICKS, a teenage negro girl in a Kentucky shanty town meets the Devil in the form of a gambler named Mr D., played by JOHN HARRISON.





### COMMAND IN BATTLE

A studio rehearsal in November, 1958, for a series by Viscount Montgomery dealing with his outstanding battles beginning with Alamein. With the Field Marshal are Sir Ian Jacob, then Director-General of the BBC, Michael Bowen, the Producer, and the Floor Manager, John Marlon Bowen, a Desert Rat, served as a wireless operator in the 5th Royal Tank Regiment, and Marlon fought in the campaign in the K R R C

### PEACE IN OUR TIME

Televising the arrival back from Munich of the British Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, in September, 1938, with his message—"Peace in our time"

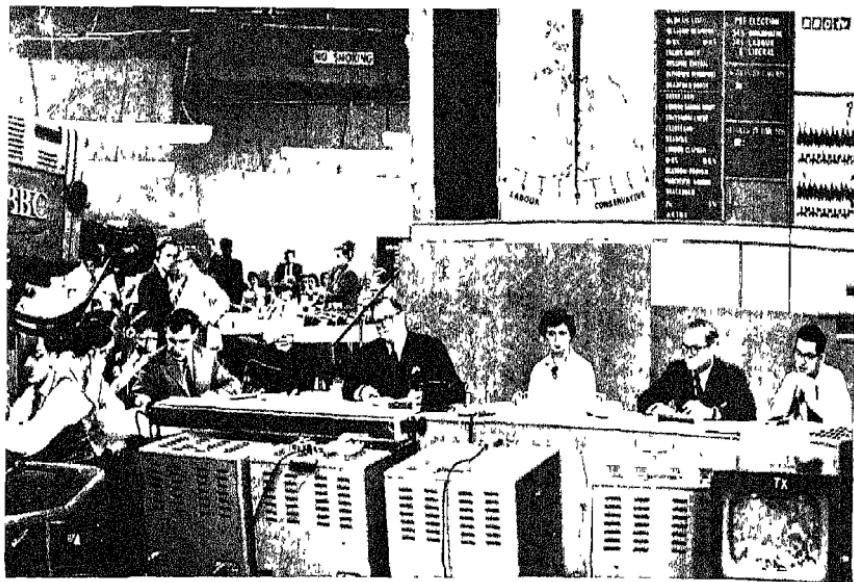




HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS THE DUKE OF EDINBURGH, gave a remarkable performance in a programme during the International Geophysical Year in 1957. In the studio with him are JAMES ORR (Private Secretary), ANTONY CRAXTON (the Royal Producer) and PETER DIMMOCK (Head of Outside Broadcasts)

THEIR ROYAL HIGHNESSES PRINCE CHARLES and PRINCESS ANNE visited the B B C Television studios in April, 1958, and met DAVID ATTENBOROUGH and the animals which he had presented on the screen. PRINCE CHARLES is holding COCKY, the pet cockatoo of DAVID ATTENBOROUGH





#### THE GENERAL ELECTION IN 1959

The biggest and most complex operation ever undertaken by BBC Television. The team in the studio, left to right, were DAVID BUTTER, RICHARD DIMBLEBY and ROBERT MACKINZIE. In the background is the news intake operation and the computer. The score-board is behind the commentators.

RICHARD DIMBLEBY, nine years before this general election, had made history by commentating with ALAN ADAIR on the first programme transmitted across the Channel, when viewers saw the town of Calais, *en direct*, with a torchlight procession, dancing in the square and a firework display. The date was 27 August 1950.



from the shelves of theatre libraries and the producers were men with experience of the theatre and the films. Now, the wheel has come full circle and writing exclusively for television is an honoured profession which has led to the formation of a Script Department within the B.B.C. Denis Johnston was, perhaps, the first to attempt writing specifically for the television screen, but it was probably Nigel Kneale who was the seed of the present Script Department. Kneale was a brilliant writer with a fantastic imagination for the macabre; an extraordinary but moving piece of macabre writing was his portrayal of a child in a cot in squalid and rat-infested surroundings; a piece of rope had been attached to the cot to enable the rats to climb up to the child; they were its only friends. Kneale wrote a series of short stories under the title of *Tomato Cain* which won a Somerset Maugham award in 1950. Michael Barry was impressed and when he became Head of Drama in 1951 he took Kneale on his staff as an adapter; later Kneale was responsible for *Quatermass* and Orwell's *1984*. *Quatermass* had a rare impact. Ian McCormick, Duncan Ross and Robert Barr were other writers whose work began to set the pattern of script-writing for the television screen.

Today the B.B.C. receives something like 500 unsolicited scripts a month. Of these, a little less than 2 per cent are acceptable. The world and his wife apparently imagine themselves capable of writing a television play. But at least they can enjoy the satisfaction of knowing that if they do write one, their masterpiece will certainly be examined quite seriously. When the script is received it will find its way to the Central Script Library; an acknowledgement is sent and an index card made out. The play is read by a first reader; a couple of pages might be enough to damn it; if the script should pass this first filter, however, it graduates to a second reader and he makes a detailed report; from this evidence the work is graded. If it is of a high grade the manuscript is passed to a Script Editor. He will either accept it as it stands, or if he thinks the author is worth encouraging, he might advise on possible alterations; he might even suggest that he tries his hand at something a bit different. If the writer has shown that he knows how to use dialogue and how to develop a character and a situation, then he is worth encouraging. If the script is accepted in its existing form it is sent to the Head of Drama. The B.B.C. usually asks for rights on a script for a

period of twelve months with certain flexibility according to the chances of getting it into the schedule. One such play was transmitted within two months of being received; this is most unusual.

Including excerpts from theatres the B.B.C. televisions approximately 250 plays a year. Theatre excerpts are limited by the Theatre Managers to forty-five minutes, and can never include the last act. Why should the theatre expose the ending of a "whodunit" to would-be theatre customers? It would be cutting their own throats.

The most usable material for television from a theatre is comedy. A piece of a straight play can tend to hang in the air without the rest of its body to support it. A piece of comedy, on the other hand, can be good entertainment by itself. A custard-pie landing on its target is good meat for a laugh, never mind what has preceded it, or what is coming next.

Once, television was a poor relation in the eyes of the theatre. Now, many theatres look to a televised excerpt as the best possible means of publicity; sometimes it might even save the life of a tottering show. The responsibility of deciding which show to televise rests with Cecil Madden, the man who put on the first television play in 1936 and lives and breathes the theatre. Henry Sherek did permit the televising of a complete West End play whilst it was still running when he presented *Frieda* just after the war and was nearly thrown out of the Society of West End Theatre Managers for his temerity; it was this which led to the agreement to televise only excerpts. Sherek's view was that if the television production was good, it usually put the theatre takings up by at least 50 per cent. If badly done it could be disastrous, as could be the case with musical comedies, which are difficult to adapt because big production numbers do not look effective on small screens. Sherek, incidentally, once signed a year's contract with the B.B.C. to present a series of plays comprising his past successes and new plays which he might put on in the theatre later on. Friends asked him: "Don't you find it an anti-climax to see the scenery being pulled down after only one performance and the company disperse after you have done as much work as you would in putting on a play in the theatre?" Sherek replied:

First of all, it is even more work, because the play has to be cut to ninety minutes, and secondly about 8,000,000 to 10,000,000 see the

production. A play would have to run for four years for the same number of people to see it. Thirdly I am doing a play a month. This would be impossible in the theatre because there are just not enough theatres to house them and where could I find the money? The production costs would be about £30,000 for a year, and even with successes the money spent would only come back slowly. If I started with failures, only one thing is certain: my Bank Manager would have to join the Foreign Legion!

The B.B.C. renewed the contract for a second year. Sherek, a great man of the theatre, once radiated a genuine warmth of welcome when I arrived on his doorstep one Sunday morning, not only unexpected, but as a complete stranger—he didn't know me from Adam. He was having breakfast, brunch I believe he called it, a combined breakfast and lunch. I was accepted into the fold as a friend of a friend, and shall think of him always as a genial man, a delightful host and a master of improvisation. What other man, when breakfasting with a charming wife, would happily accept two extra bodies thrust upon him out of the blue, and then feed them like fighting cocks. Brunch with the Shereks is both immensely satisfying and most exciting.

An intelligent producer can do a good deal to give freshness of treatment even to the best known and most familiar play. A striking example was George More O'Ferrall's handling of the witches in *Macbeth* at least ten years ago. They spoke only in whispers and decidedly chilled the blood. They were presented in close-up, and had some of the uncanny qualities of a Dürer etching. Rudolph Cartier more recently has developed with amazing skill such techniques as the expansion of the screen; he has found a depth and a flamboyancy which give his productions rich and individualistic qualities.

Television drama may be short and confined to a single set or spread out over several nights employing dozens of sets of scenery. It is not bound by the studio walls. When the plot demands it, the action can break into the open by means of films, dovetailing imperceptibly into scenes from the studio. The B.B.C. Drama Department employs about eight staff producers; it has a number of what are called Contract Producers who are not on the staff but are under contract, plus the free-lances. One of the first television producers with no previous experience of either the theatre or of films was John Jacobs; Jacobs is

emphatically a child of the television screen; he learnt from the bottom and climbed the rungs the hard way after joining the B.B.C. in 1947 as a Continuity Announcer in the Overseas Service. He describes himself as a disciple of Ian Atkins, a mentor who taught him everything.

When John Jacobs or any other drama producer is given a play to do he can expect six or seven weeks for the operation; casting will take about three of them. Sometimes, it pays to cast in haste; sometimes it is worth waiting to land the bigger fish. One such fish was Donald Pleasence whom Jacobs wanted for a principal role in *The Assassin*. Pleasence at the time was playing in *The Caretaker* at the Duchess and this seemed to rule him out for *The Assassin*, but Jacobs wanted him particularly and offered to draw up a schedule of rehearsal times to fit in with the theatre performances; he got his man.

When the producer first reads a play he might see in his mind's eye an ideal actor for one of the parts. It could be a big name; in this case it's a spin of the coin whether he is free or not. It could be a lesser light whom the producer might have seen on the screen at a local cinema, weeks or even months before; he probably has no idea of his name so the Reference Library is put to work to discover his identity and generally does. Then it's up to the Booking Department.

Not always is it the main characters who provide the biggest casting headaches. In *Dream of Treason*, for instance, all that was required of Tom, a shorthand writer, was to enter a house with an M I 5 man, hang up his coat, go into the main room, take shorthand notes, and then disappear without having spoken a word. This seemed to be the part for an out of work office boy, but Jacobs did not see it that way. He believes that every part, however menial it may seem, should be played by an actor, but then what self-respecting actor wants a part without lines? As far as Tom was concerned the producer regarded his presence taking notes in a betrayal of secrets story as adding to the tension, and he found a bona-fide actor for the part who had not worked with him on television before and was happy to set the ball rolling and to establish contact. Tom was thus suitably cast according to the producer's prescription.

There are basic rules to be observed even for the part of a maid who might only make a couple of appearances bringing in the afternoon

tea or the morning mail. Contrasts are important. It would be wrong to cast a maid who might bear some resemblance to her mistress, nor indeed should the employee of an aged spinster of the Victorian era give the impression that she is on a night off from the *Folies Bergere*; such qualification would hardly have got her the job in the first place. Young actresses from Repertory Companies are pleased to play this sort of part to get studio experience.

Jacobs believes that one of the fundamentals of successful casting is to see every artiste beforehand irrespective of the size of the part. He once flew to Rome to talk with Diane Cilento and subsequently cast her for *Strange Interlude*. It is wrong, he says, to tell an actor that he is very good for a part but is too short or too tall. If you are good enough then you are short enough or tall enough. He believes that another basic essential is a happy company. Television is not an easy medium for actors. Robert Harris, an actor who has done a considerable amount of television work, once said that television is like going round the Grand National course and if you only fall off once you haven't done too badly! Television produces problems all along the line; that is why it is so exciting and stimulates a sort of comradeship in adversity with the ultimate satisfaction of final triumph. Things become difficult when they get impossible. A formula for impossibility takes a little longer to develop.

Sets for the play are being designed while the casting is in progress; a planning meeting is held about ten days after the appearance of the script with the producer in the chair. The other delegates are the designer, Toms and Atoms! (Technical Operations Managers and Assistant Technical Operations Managers), make-up and wardrobe. The main consideration is how the play fits into the studio in relation to everybody's problems. Whatever the producer does is going to affect someone; deciding to move a 2 ft wall might present lighting with a new situation because some lights were hidden behind it. The producer is allocated a production team which consists of an Assistant (Renate Esslin in the case of Jacobs), a Production Assistant, who wears the headphones on the floor, and an Assistant Floor Manager.

When the casting is complete Jacobs hibernates within his own four walls at home for the precision task of marking up the script with

camera positions and every entry and exit of the players. Shall we make this a head-on shot, or would it be better to catch the old man side-faced as he greets his son; what is the best method of withdrawing the cameras from the dining room scene in readiness for the arrival of a visitor at London Airport—the next scene of the play. When the hibernation period is over and rehearsals have begun a separate camera-script is prepared; this is usually in excess of 100 pages and to the uninitiated, is written in a foreign language; a sample is produced below.

*VESPERY: He was misinformed.  
The situation has changed. A  
pretender to the French throne is  
an—extraneous consideration.*

93. 1—B (35)

4 shot with Kley  
L. of frame

I am not in the market for a king.  
That will be all, gentlemen.

4 QUICK MOVE  
MOVE TO B

(As Generals move)

(THE THREE GENERALS SALUTE,  
START OUT)

94. 4—B (35)

Generals twds  
cam. Track in  
with Roucheau to  
Vesperry

Roucheau! I'd like to talk to  
you for a moment.

1 Lens Change

(As Vesperry rises)

(ROUCHEAU REMAINS.

95. 1—B (24)

2 shot Vesp/Roucheau IT)

VESPERY GETS UP, GOES OVER  
TO A SMALL CLOSET, TAKES OUT  
A BOTTLE OF BRANDY, HOLDS

Pan Vesp. L. to  
drinks table and  
track in to  
M.C.U.

Our friend Mousset has too many  
irons in the fire.

ROUCHEAU: Yes, sir.

VESPERY: Roucheau, I trust you.

96. 3—B (14)

M.C.U. Roucheau

Surprisingly enough this does make sense to someone.

Three weeks before the "off" the cast meet for the first rehearsal, not, as one might think, in the grandeur and luxury of the new Television Centre, but at Alford House, Aveline Street, Kennington, within a cricket ball's throw of Kennington Oval. It is, in fact, the Lambeth Boys Club. The first meeting is usually at 10.30 a.m. for those members who are good map readers and arrive on time, and a little later for the others! Operations begin with a coffee-break, not according to any union specifications, but because there is nothing like a "cuppa" to promote early team spirit. The first tangible move towards getting something done is to read the play through; this gives an idea of timing. The producer sits quietly and listens. It is the only time during the next three weeks that he is able to sit quietly. He has learnt from bitter experience not to be put off by the most diabolical reading; often the worst is a prelude to an outstanding performance on the night. Actors vary considerably in how they treat this first reading; some perform dispassionately; others put the whole works into it; the dispassionate actor might need a little gingering up so as to get the others in the right frame of mind. Costume and make-up people are in attendance and in due course the entire entourage descend upon the "local" for stimulating refreshment, a disquieting scene for local business-men who have their set ways. "Oh, not this lot again!" Drama can turn the saloon bar upside down!

By the end of the first week the play has been put on the floor. Initially the floor is marked out in sets to assimilate footage of floor space and the chalk lines are taped to preserve them. Invariably the tape gets a bit moth-eaten as rehearsals proceed, especially if the Boys Club stage a Boxing tournament, a skiffle group, a dance, and table tennis on successive nights!

The first week is a period of script amendments; every participant is told where the cameras will be. During the second week scenes are taken individually and in more detail. By the Wednesday or Thursday of the third week the cast is giving a performance equivalent to a first night; absolute perfection should be reached by Friday. There is something sad about a television first night; it is also a last night.

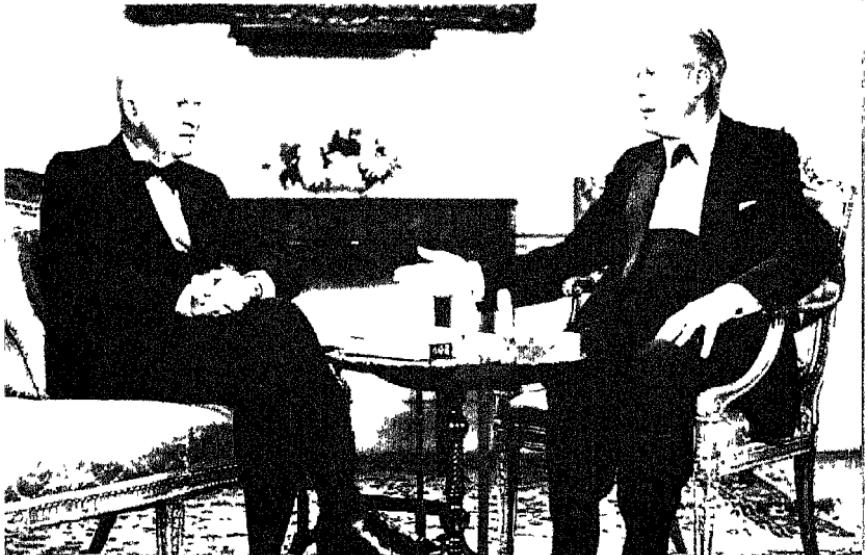
If on Friday night the producer decides to wander into the studio from which his play will be transmitted he might just as well save

himself the time; he will find someone else's show there. It is only during Friday night with the help of an all-night team, that the studio is prepared for the Sunday night play. The previous show is struck (the term in the business for dismantling) and it is not until two o'clock on the Saturday—with the performance approximately thirty hours away—that the producer, the cameras and the actors are together for the first time in the studio being used for transmission; the camera-men and the boom operators are seeing the play for the first time in their lives—and by Sunday evening, 13,000,000 people are expecting to see absolute perfection! Nothing must go wrong with something like 250 camera cuts (changing from one camera to another). The cast rehearse until ten o'clock on Saturday night; and begin again on Sunday and continue right up until the time of transmission on Sunday evening. When it is over all that remains to be done is to get a good night's sleep before reading the press reactions. Whether they are good, bad or indifferent, all that was yesterday—where do we go tomorrow?



On 28 November 1958 RICHARD M. NIXON, then Vice-President of the United States, was questioned in Press Conference by KENNETH HARRIS (*The Observer*), JOHN FREEMAN (*New Statesman*), RENE MACCOLL (*Daily Express*) and DON COOK (*New York Herald Tribune*). VICE-PRESIDENT NIXON is seen afterwards with GERALD BEADLE (then Director of Television) and HUGH CARTETON GREENE (now Director-General).

The President of the United States, GENERAL EISENHOWER with the British Prime Minister, the RT HON HAROLD MACMILLAN at 10 Downing Street, before a joint broadcast in August, 1959



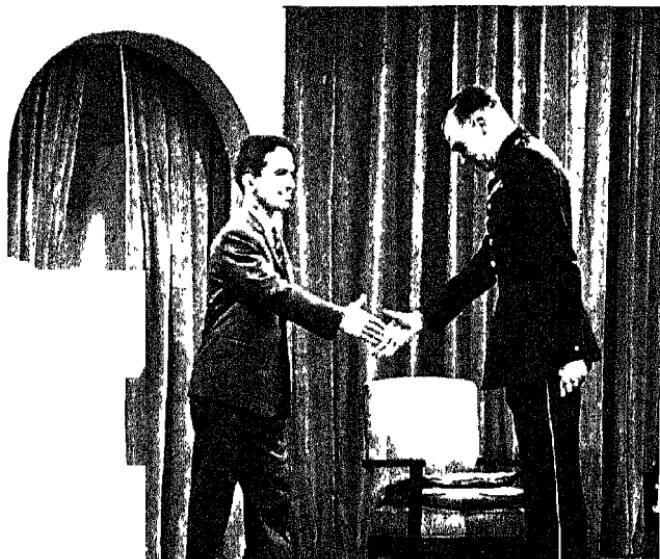


### KING FEISAL OF IRAQ

DOUGLAS BIRKINSHAW explains the working of an early television camera, with its cover removed, to KING FEISAL of Iraq, who was then at Harrow. He was tragically assassinated in July, 1958.

### A KING APPEARS ON "THIS IS YOUR LIFE"

KING HUSSEIN of Jordan comes on stage to greet R.S.M. JOHN LORD, M.B.E., of the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, the subject of "This is Your Life" on Monday, 30 November 1959. RAMON ANDREWS watches an exciting point in the programme's history.



## CHAPTER XI: "THIS IS YOUR LIFE"

*"I'll do it without a salary" . . . a programme on life itself which was honoured by the visit of a King . . . the tension never eases.*

"**I**THINK it's terrific! I'll do it without a salary." This extraordinary enthusiasm was expressed in the summer of 1955. Leslie Jackson, Producer of "What's My Line?" had just seen a recording of a programme which Ronnie Waldman had brought back from America; the recording was the life of Victor McLaglen, tough guy of the Hollywood screen. Jackson went overboard with the idea; many in authority at the B.B.C. took the opposite view. The British public, they felt, would not stand for "This is Your Life". It was an intrusion into private life, and intrusion was characteristically un-English; the element of false pretences necessary to lure the unsuspecting subject into the studio was basically undesirable. The show was thought to be in bad taste, and generally unacceptable, but when "Jacko" of the B.B.C. wants something he usually gets it, and he wanted "This is Your Life" in the schedule. He was fascinated by the challenge it offered and his powers of persuasion did the trick. Success or failure was on Jackson's head; he has remained with the programme ever since and shares with Eamonn Andrews much of the glory won by "This is Your Life".

The whole fabric of the presentation springs from the element of complete surprise, the subject has no idea of his fate; this, the B.B.C. stress, is emphatically true. To keep the secret is a cloak and dagger operation good enough for a plot in any thriller. Sometimes, in special circumstances in America, the subject is given a preliminary warning. Eddie Cantor, for instance, who suffers from a weak heart, was told. Lilian Roth, drug addict, had such a past that she was asked if she would mind. It was this programme which did much to rebuild a broken life.

Roy Campanella, American baseball star, was in hospital at the time of his programme, and since the transmission was done from his hospital bed, he, too, had to be told. In this country, the subject has never known.

Another difference between the programmes each side of the Atlantic is that in this country the producer is always looking for a climax—a build up to the last trump card in his hand. In America the climax is ready made. The subject is merely showered with gifts from sponsors. “Bobby Darin, great rhythm singer, whose records have captured grown-up America and made you an idol of the teenagers—This has been your Life. There’ll be a party tonight in your honour at the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel where all your family and friends have been staying. You’ll receive your own film of tonight’s programme along with this Bell and Howell sound projector and electric eye movie camera. Lilt has asked Marchal Jewellers, New York, to design this gold-tie bar and money clip especially for you, and these cuff-links commemorating your appearance on ‘This is Your Life’. The students and faculty of the Bronx High School of Science are proud of your success. So Lilt has had Marchal design this special plaque to be known as the Bobby Darin Music Award. Each year it will be awarded to the senior boy or girl who shows the most outstanding achievement in music. Bobby, we know that your record collection is one of your big interests in life. So Lilt presents you with \$1,000-worth of recordings of your own choice, which you may select at your convenience from the RCA Victor Catalogue.” Who wouldn’t be on “This is Your Life” in America?

In England, there can be no such ending. The American presentation is perhaps more frank and does tend to overplay sentiment. Both, however, avoid like the plague hitting the subject below the belt. “This is Your Life”, which caused palpitations when it began in England, has not once overstepped the marking line of good taste. Only one subject, Danny Blanchflower, the captain of Tottenham Hotspur has refused; the viewers did not see the refusal on the screen. If the secret leaks out the programme is cancelled. This has happened. It did with Stanley Matthews who was to have been the first subject, it happened again when Greer Garson had made a recording for the life of Cecil Madden and the recording fell quite accidentally into Madden’s

hands. Matthews was cornered at a later date. The fascinating life of Madden remains untold.

Originally, the producer wanted the programme fortnightly instead of monthly, the request was turned down, and then, to his surprise, it was put on his plate weekly. Never, while a series is running, is he able to relax; he is a slave of the telephone which rings incessantly like a peel of bells in his office. Perhaps night sleepers have to be booked for a small contingent travelling down from Scotland; it might be during the Edinburgh Festival when you can't get sleepers for love or money. Would-be helpers are constantly ringing with suggestions of first-class subjects (many are a complete waste of time). There might be sudden alterations to make to a script. The decision has to be taken whether or not it is worth the cost of bringing someone from Australia. The belief that money is no object on this programme is quite wrong; it does have to work to a budget. Then there is the question of hotel accommodation. The subject has to be housed well away from the rest of the people, and so it goes on. The guiding and immeasurable influence which Eamonn Andrews brings to bear on "This is Your Life" is a constant source of comfort to the producer.

It may surprise the world to know that a full rehearsal is held on Sunday, the day before the programme, without, of course, the subject, and without Eamonn Andrews; very often it is without the wife of the subject, or the husband, should the subject be a woman. It is not always easy for a wife to find a ready-made excuse for leave of absence all day on a Sunday, especially if Sunday normally is a day of relaxation and it is customary for husband and wife to spend it together at home. It is always a great mental strain on a wife to keep the secret. She is advised by the experts to behave as normally as possible, but what a great temptation it must be for a wife when her husband decides to wear his oldest suit on *the* day; she knows that 12,000,000 people are going to see him in close-up that evening. He has no idea—ignorance is bliss! Quite often during rehearsals either on the day before or on the day, relatives of the subject get cold feet. "I think you will be better without me," many have said. When they come into the presence of Eamonn a warmth of personality and gentle Irish persuasion have often overcome the difficulties, but not always. One man, very dubious of his ability to summon up enough courage to face the cameras, was

sent to a doctor who administered a tranquillizer; this helped him say his piece back stage and everyone awaited his entrance—he never came. Courage had failed him at the last ditch. A scribbled note held up by a call boy was spotted by Eamonn who covered up brilliantly. Many are stimulated into an appearance much against their nervous system because of a sincere desire to pay tribute to brother Bill, whose worthy life it is.

It is these people who guard the secret so zealously. Any one of them could let the cat out of the bag. But it is a great honour for brother Bill, and over their dead body will the secret come out and ruin the show. This code of honour had been sustained for over 150 programmes.

The complicated ritual of getting the subject into the studio has proved beyond doubt that variety is the spice of life. On many occasions the subject has been transported to Shepherd's Bush by the same car-driver—Danny; he must work to a precise time schedule—he mustn't be early. If Danny has found himself ahead of the clock he either has to drive round the back-streets and risk annoying his passenger who thinks he is lost, or alternatively he has to excuse himself on grounds of nature and disappear down the steps of the Gentlemen's Toilet. Danny has probably spent more of his life in the Gentlemen's Toilet at Shepherd's Bush Green than any man living or dead!

Something quite different was thought up for Stirling Moss. He was driving past the theatre at Shepherd's Bush when he was flagged down by a motor-cycle policeman; the "Cop" happened to be an actor rigged up for the part with the full knowledge of the Police. Eamonn Andrews appeared at the near-side window and Moss was on the hook. It was intended at one time to have a microphone in position to record the conversation between Moss and the apparent arm of the law. Happily, the idea was scrapped. Moss is no great lover of the "Cops"! The producer had been given a near heart-attack earlier in the afternoon when a close friend had telephoned him and said: "I've got an idea that Stirling knows." A hurried conference took place, should the programme be abandoned, it was decided to let it go on because the informant was not 100 per cent certain. Moss said afterwards "I had no idea at all".

Vera Lynn raised a problem because many of her programmes have

come from the very spot where "This is Your Life" is televised. It would be difficult to get her there without raising suspicion, show business is suspicious of Monday Night anyway. But there was a way out. Vera is a member of a select little club which has a night out once a month, each member taking it in turn to play host and provide some spectacular surprise packet. It could be a party on a houseboat, it could be a barbecue. On this particular night, Eric Robinson was in the chair, and in the know as far as Vera Lynn's "This is Your Life" was concerned! A large van was chartered, the windows were blacked out, the name of the club was scrawled across the outside, and inside there was enough champagne to launch a battleship. This looked a promising enough evening. Everybody climbed aboard and away they went, straight into the scene dock at Shepherd's Bush. Vera was safely and unsuspectingly in the net!

Richard Todd was to do a commentary on a film of Oberammergau. He went to Lime Grove one Monday evening to see a cut version of it. He afterwards talked with Producer Alan Sleeth who suggested a drink in the club bar. Todd knew the bar well; he also knew that to get to it he had to pass through the "Tonight" studio; he knew that "Tonight" had just finished. He did not know that Eamonn Andrews was awaiting his prey in that very studio. Cameras were in position and the meeting of the two men was filmed live. Todd was driven at top speed to where the audience waited four minutes away, as excerpts from some of his films were being shown to fill the gap.

When the sixth series began in September, 1960, Leslie Jackson was surrounded by a trusted and experienced team. His Secretary, Sylvia Lange, was the only one new to it; she was learning fast! Peter Moore, the Script Editor, was an old hand whose proudest achievement was to secure the services of a King for "This is Your Life". The subject was to be Regimental Sergeant Major John Lord, M.B.E., stationed at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst. Moore knew that King Hussein of Jordan had passed through Sandhurst and was intrigued by the possibility of persuading the King to make a piece of film for the programme. He wrote to King Hussein in Jordan asking if he could send out a camera unit but received no reply; he then contacted the Jordanian Embassy in London who told him that the King was touring abroad and would subsequently arrive in England. The life of R.S.M.

Lord was scheduled for a period when it was expected that the King would be here. He arrived in England late on the Saturday before the programme was going out live on the Monday. Moore telephoned his hotel at regular intervals throughout Sunday and almost his last call produced a most helpful voice which seemed fully to understand the difficulties facing the B.B.C. Would the King appear or not? Encouraged by this friendly man, Moore asked, "Who is it speaking?" "The King" said the voice! He was still unable to give any decision and the telephone call routine began again on Monday. One last despairing call at five o'clock with the show going on the air at half past seven produced the startling and exciting information that the King was actually on his way to Sandhurst. The news that a King is expected any minute can hardly be received by the Commandant of a Military Establishment—most of all Sandhurst—with unruffled calm. His first thought was to turn out a guard of honour at the main gate, but Guards of Honour and "This is Your Life" do not go hand in hand; secrecy remains the keynote even in the case of Royalty. Someone mentioned the tradesman's entrance and nearly caused the death of a General! Military discipline and etiquette did prevail, however, when the King walked on to the stage during the programme. The producer sitting in the control van was perplexed by the silence; he had expected tremendous applause. But the Military audience was standing solidly to attention. "This is Your Life" had been honoured by a King.

In addition to Peter Moore, the Script Editor, Jackson has a Production Assistant and four investigator-writers. Nickola Stern, pertinacious and with a flair for people, was once a ballet dancer. Ronnie Vivian was a former Detective-Inspector in the C.I.D. Lian Nolan was a newspaper columnist, and Shirley McNab, a New Zealander, was a feature writer. In the early stages of an investigation their main task is to assess the possible integrity of the witness. Never, in a first interview, is "This is Your Life" mentioned; they may pose as a representative of a local newspaper having first sought permission from the paper. Having seen the wife, is it likely that she can keep the secret from her husband? This is vitally important. Is brother Fred likely to show off in the local and tell all his chums in confidence what he knows? If Fred is that sort this would ginger up his prestige quite a bit. Is cousin Nelly a gossip of the first order who will spill the beans over the

garden wall? The investigators have to read human minds and then proceed from there. Only when each witness has proved that he or she is capable of honouring a confidence is the news broken to them; then the writing begins.

The telephone bell can ring as much as it likes in Jackson's office on a Tuesday morning. The "This is Your Life" team have the morning off after the show the night before. On Tuesday afternoon Jackson visits Eamonn Andrews in his flat for script discussions on next week's show; sometimes bitter discussions, as both are hypercritical, and there is often a frank inquest on the previous night's show. On Wednesday the script is being finalized and the decision is taken as to whether or not the subject's long lost brother shall be flown over from the Christmas Islands. On Thursday the producer is at work looking at film captions, gimmicks, cars are laid on, and the final script goes to Eamonn. Friday is a full run-over. Saturday is a day off but on Sunday the participants assemble for a general run-through. Here, an odd atmosphere prevails. The technicians have to be in the know and everybody wonders who knows what; it might almost be an assembly of an espionage network. Eamonn Andrews does not appear this time but joins the rehearsals on Monday to steer some very worried bodies safely through an ordeal. Another "This is Your Life" is then ready for transmission.

The subjects have been taken from every walk of life. Only one has been posthumous, the life of John Logie Baird. It was in this programme that Ben Clapp, the first man ever to work for Baird, gave this word picture of the inventor. "John was cold. Not in his nature, but in his person. There was never a man suffered so much from the cold. Even with the windows tight shut and fires burning he would be frozen to the bone. He looked the part of the inventor with his great mane of bushy hair—but with him it was a necessity. If he ever had it cut he caught cold!"

Sydney Moseley, Baird's closest friend—journalist, adventurer, invigorating personality, referred to Baird's reaction to the Television Advisory Committee's decision in 1937 to use the E.M.I. system. "Well, there's no denying it was a shattering blow to him. But John, as you may imagine, was used to disappointments. He certainly had enough to become used to them. This was the time that his great quality of courage showed at its brightest, for he set to work at once—

harder than ever—to prove that at least the future of large screen and colour television lay with his mechanical devices. John's place in television today is abundantly clear. Whatever men may say, John Baird was the father of all television and no one can rob him of that distinguished paternity."

The "This is Your Life" programme with the highest rating was that on the life of Madame Anne Brusselmans, the wonderful Belgian woman who was responsible for the escape of hundreds of allied airmen during the war. When Brussels was finally liberated she had no less than 135 Allied airmen hidden. Twice her house was searched by the Gestapo. This programme had all the dramatic moments. It opened with five airmen who were all asked if they knew who had been responsible for their escape; none did. It was Anne Brusselmans. At the end, almost as if it were an afterthought, Eamonn Andrews asked the audience if any of them owed their life to Anne Brusselmans; about twenty stood up; they had been carefully planted in the audience. It was a great presentation of a truly great life.

War stories have figured prominently in this series. Wing Commander R. R. Stanford Tuck, D.S.O., D.F.C., famous Battle of Britain pilot, Padre Noel Duckworth, Brigadier Glyn Hughes, C.B.E., D.S.O., M.C. Roland Robert Stanford Tuck, one of only two men in R.A.F. history to have two bars to his D.F.C. was shot down four times and survived two collisions in the air. He baled-out, crash-landed and ditched in the Channel. More than once he limped home with his aircraft on fire. In enemy attacks his windscreen was shattered, the throttle lever blown out of his hand, his oxygen mask ripped off his face, yet he was wounded only twice and then slightly. Now living peacefully, happily, and successfully—as a mushroom farmer in a Kentish village, under the skies in which he fought so incessantly and so brilliantly. Noel Duckworth, who coxed the winning Cambridge Boat Race crews of 1934, 1935 and 1936 (they never won by less than four lengths in these three years), was the grim story of Changi Gaol at the hands of the Japanese, and the horror hell of all prison camps, at Songkuari, on the infamous Burma Railway, where because of disease and starvation, out of 1,680 men fewer than 250 survived. It was here that Padre Duckworth never failed to visit the men although the Japs threatened to shoot him if he persisted. Brigadier Glyn Hughes, a

doctor, the man who accepted the surrender of the notorious Belsen Camp, a guiding light in the world famous Barbarian Rugby Club and most of all—an inspiringly brave man, was a life which the "This is Your Life" team prepared in three weeks. His story had appeared in the *Evening Standard*, and it was felt essential to get it on the screen as soon as possible afterwards—the whole operation took only twenty-one days.

Shows in progress on the theatre stage have been stopped to allow "This is Your Life" to intrude. It happened with Louie Ramsay, in pantomime in Scotland, and the producer feared a gathering of angry-kilted Scots who were likely to miss their last bus home because the show would overrun by at least half an hour—nothing like this happened. A London show was stopped for the life of Florence Desmond. Once the cameras looked behind the scenes in the final process of making a feature film. They were in a music recording studio watching a session in progress for the film *Wonderful Things*, produced by Anna Neagle, directed by her husband, Herbert Wilcox, and starring Frankie Vaughan. It was the life of the First Lady of the British Screen, Anna Neagle, star of thirty films, great roles like *Victoria the Great*, *Odette, G.C.*, *The Lady with the Lamp*, the immortal story of Florence Nightingale. This was a night of emotion for Anna Neagle. Anna, like countless others, will always be grateful for the reassuring presence of the warm-hearted Irishman—Eamonn Andrews.

This is essentially a programme of human emotions; the shock of finding one's life under the microscope has been seen on many a face, sometimes a face which expresses indignation, but more often than not indignation gives way to pleasure as old friends appear one after the other; nostalgia can mellow many a disagreeable mood. The subjects can at least take a crumb of comfort from the fact that the producer lives his life permanently on a bed of nettles—what is likely to go wrong today?

His wife dreads the time when a new series begins. Once "Jacko" decided to take up golf; that was in 1953. He has had one lesson each year since. He once read a book! Is he fed up with "This is Your Life"? Yes, but he could never leave it; it has a magnetic attraction. In a way it is like diving headlong into the deep end but with a subconscious mind assuring him all the time that he won't drown! "Perhaps I am a

glutton for punishment," says Jackson, "but I wouldn't leave this programme for all the tea in China. After all, I wanted it in the first place. I want it just as much now." In a world where sharp criticism of individuals has become commonplace, "This is Your Life" is a programme which portrays all the good things in people's lives. There is immense personal satisfaction in paying a tribute to a worthy cause, and to stimulating happiness which is clearly shown at the little parties at the end of each show. Often it is the devil's own job to get the participants off the stage so as to assemble them upstairs for a celebration. Then comes the problem of breaking up the celebration in due course. And so "This is Your Life" goes on; from C. B. Fry to Donald Campbell; from Sir Compton Mackenzie to Esmond Knight; from Albert Whelan to Harry Secombe; from Bransby Williams to Kenneth More; from Billy Butlin to Russ Conway; from Arthur Askey to Gracie Fields, and to many an unknown but worthwhile life.

The British public *have* accepted "This is Your Life". They have felt that the false pretences have been justified. They, too, with the subject, have shared an element of surprise. How many people have said "I just wait to see who the subject is and then switch off if I don't want to see it." But once they have switched on, how few switch off. Yes, "This is Your Life" does indeed possess a magnetic attraction, and the viewer, like Jackson, is held within its powerful grip. The potential material for the programme is inexhaustive, just as long as there are people. It could run for ever, without making impossible demands on script-writers,—an interesting thought!

## CHAPTER XII: THE TELEVISION CENTRE

*Party night for the grand opening . . . this great electronic factory took ten years to rise at a cost of £10,000,000 . . . a studio to take double-decker buses and elephants . . . provision for colour and a second service.*

**I**t was party night, and what a party! A sparkling, bubbling night of gaiety, a night of stars, champagne and lobster, an autograph hunter's paradise, and an occasion never to be forgotten in the annals of B.B.C. Television. The day—Wednesday, 29 June 1960, the first time that a studio programme was transmitted from the new Television Centre at the White City. The B.B.C. decided to launch it in the Grand Manner and didn't put a foot wrong in doing so. "First Night", the first studio production from the new Television Centre, featured David Nixon, Arthur Askey, Alfred Drake, Richard Hearne, Leslie Mitchell, Elizabeth Larner, Irving Davies, Sheila O'Neill, The Derricos, The Irving Davies Dancers, The Leslie Roberts Silhouettes, The Television Toppers, The George Mitchell Singers. The orchestra, leader David McCallum, conducted by Eric Robinson. The audience, inside the studio, were the men who had helped to make the centre; it was a gesture to the builders of a modern enterprise. In other studios an array of television sets provided the milling throng with a full view of the show. Wherever you looked, there was a television screen. It was one of those nights when more stars were watching than appearing.

Gathered round one supper table were Hans and Lotte Hass, Armand and Michaela Denis, Peter Scott, David Attenborough and Cecil Madden. The very first Director of pre-war television, Gerald Cock, was seen talking to Douglas Birkinshaw, the original Research Engineer, now Superintendent Engineer, television. The commanding

figure of the Director-General, Mr Hugh Carleton Greene; the big-hearted great little man Arthur Askey; Jack Payne and Henry Hall, stalwarts of B.B.C. Dance Orchestras of years gone by, and still to the fore; Isobel Barnett and Gilbert Harding representing television's most popular panel game, "What's My Line?"; Mr Magic—David Nixon; Mr Music—Eric Robinson; Jack Warner (Good Evening All) of the Dock Green Constabulary; Cliff Michelmore and Polly Elwes from "Tonight"; David Jacobs for popular music; Vera Lynn (still a Forces sweetheart); Leslie Mitchell, the first television announcer; Sid James (no birds, and alas, no Hancock); Hattie Jacques and Eric Sykes; Peter Dimmock, Head of Outside Broadcasts; Denis Muir and Frank Norden, kings of scripts. What a panorama of show business talent; what a show these combined forces could have put on. All were unanimous that when the B.B.C. does decide to put on a party it really does the job superbly.

Many wandered curiously round the vast building, and when, somewhere about midnight, I was standing on the deserted floor of the studio from which the first programme had come with its producer Graeme Muir and Douglas Birkinshaw, I could sense Birkinshaw's mood of nostalgia. The year 1932 must have seemed a long way off—the year he first entered B.B.C. television; so must "Ally Pally" and 1936, and that night during the war when he had found the log that told the sad story: "Closed down". As we looked at the conglomeration of equipment, the result of years of technical brains and progress, I wished for a moment that John Logie Baird could have been standing there with us; I thought of Hastings and his Maltese cross, and Bill and William Taynton. Exciting days which seem now almost a lifetime away from modern television; here was a new world which had its origin in Baird's mind as he had wandered alone across the cliffs to Fairlight Glen; thoughts which have profoundly changed civilization.

The Television Centre took ten years to rise from an architect's drawing board to its then stage of completion; much more remained to be finished. The cost was £10,000,000. The centre consists of a circular main block, covering three and a half acres, with its studios, engineering areas, and administrative offices; a scenery block; and a restaurant block. Later a works block, on the east side of the thirteen acre site, and a spur, an extension of the main block was to be built.

When the press visited the centre a fortnight before the first programme, Gerald Beadle, the Director of B.B.C. Television, told them: "I want to ask you not to think of this building as a piece of architectural virtuosity or as a spacious and comfortable home for the B.B.C. It is both these things of course. I want you just for a few minutes to think of it as an industrial building—a factory—the largest, best equipped and most carefully planned factory of its kind in the world. Its function is to produce about 1,500 hours per annum of electronic programme material for television. This is a very big output for a single unit. In terms of sheer quantity it is the equivalent of 1,000 full length feature films. But the B.B.C. Television Service screens twice this amount even now. We have other studios capable of major productions in five principal British cities. We have a large number of mobile units operating throughout the country. We have the news studios at Alexandra Palace, we have Eurovision bringing us programmes from Continental Europe, we buy some material ready-made on film from more distant sources—mainly in the United States, Canada and Australia. In addition to all this we have a considerable film-making operation of our own based at the Ealing Studios and this alone handles material which in quantity is the equivalent of 140 full length feature films a year. The B.B.C. makes more programmes and buys less from outside sources than does any other television authority. Just as Hollywood is the principal world centre for photographic programmes, so Shepherd's Bush is the principal world centre for electronic programmes. This great building is a symbol of the industry's maturity. It is the wonder and envy of television operators from every country in the world. To Great Britain it is an asset of incalculable value, so long as we as a nation retain the will to play a leading role culturally, politically, and commercially in world affairs."

In designing the centre care had been taken to look well ahead and to provide the necessary space for future developments, such as colour and a second programme. This will make it possible, when the time comes, to install the additional electronic equipment lighting, and ventilation plant without any major building work. Space is also available should it be found that additional studios are required.

Studio 1, the largest studio, is 108 x 100 x 54 ft high. It will have a pit 7 ft 6 in deep into which part of the floor (50 x 30 ft) can be

lowered. The pit will be capable of being filled with water for possible use of programmes of an aquatic nature. The floor is designed to carry, for instance, the loads of double decker buses and a line of elephants each with its forelegs resting on the hindquarters of the one in front!

The ventilation system has 123 fans, 16 pumps, 151 electric motors, 150 heaters, 1,600 filter coils, 10 miles of ducting, 2½ miles of piping, 150 automatic controls and 900 dampers. Two absorption refrigeration machines provide cooling water for all the air-conditioning plants.

The heating system involves five oil-fired Super Lancashire boilers with a total capacity of 67,000 lb of steam per hour. It includes more than 1,000 radiators and there are over 20 miles of circulating mains serving the heating and hot water installations.

There is little need for applied dramatic expression within the buildings which make up the Television Centre; there are, however, a few cases, such as the entrance hall, where function coupled with shape had demanded a special aesthetic treatment. The entrance hall, which follows the curve of the ring, is some 60 ft long  $\times$  25 ft wide and is 21 ft high to the underside of a suspended grille above which are lights which can be intensified for photographing arrivals. It contains a gallery which may also be used for televising. It is connected visually with the colonnade at its east end, and with the central garden by continuous windows along its south side; at the west end a corridor leads to the studios and other ground floor accommodation whilst an escalator landing and a lift lobby open off it to the north. It is thus a buffer between the outside world and the inside plan and, with its diverse components, demands one dramatic feature of its own. This is met by a mural designed by John Piper. This mural which extends over the full width of the west wall opposite the entrance doors is 25 ft long and 14 ft high and is of mosaic. John Piper has explained his strong preference for this material; "because it is a solution of a modern trouble—the muddle caused by having to use easel-and-gallery-picture medium of oils for decorative wall treatment; because it does something physical towards uniting decoration and architecture; because it is, in itself, a building material part of a wall and one with the wall."

Mr Piper has chosen to be completely abstract, without either realism or symbolism.

The Television Centre was aptly described by the Director as a factory. It is a factory with a difference—a factory whose final product must be an enormous number of individual creations. All these creations must emerge according to a very tight time schedule, but none must bear the imprint of the conveyor belt. However complex the television factory may be, wrote Ian Atkins, it must remain completely flexible to meet the infinitely varying demands of individual producers as, one after another, they work in it. In any system, complexity and flexibility tend to be mutually exclusive. This is probably the greatest problem presented by such a concept as the Television Centre.

What, for example, is the producer's ideal studio. Sometimes it is infinitely large; often he is looking for a cosy, intimate room where experts in other fields may talk without being conscious that the television camera is there at all. Technical equipment is a constant problem. None of the older B.B.C. studios could provide more than four cameras. The drama studio at the centre is normally provided with the customary four, but two more can be quickly installed for any production; this is quite invaluable. Is six cameras not overdoing it a little? The answer is "No"; one scene in a ninety minute play may call for an unusual camera-angle looking down, perhaps, from a 15 ft rostrum. The producer cannot afford to lock up a quarter of his assets for thirty seconds, nor can he use the high camera at less appropriate moments without weakening the effect he is trying to achieve. In the older studios, therefore, the high shot would be out; at the Television Centre it will be in.

Whether his programme is "live" or pre-recorded, whether his subject is fact or fiction, glamour or gloom, the television producer will always have to contend with the fact that time is always against him. The electronic studio will never be at his disposal long enough for him to achieve the result that, as a perfectionist, he wants. At the centre a great deal has been done to help him. Electric hoists, cyclorama tracks, remotely controlled lamps, nearness to the property shop and scene store, have all reduced the time required to prepare the studio. They have increased the time available to rehearse important programmes. Those contributing directly to the visual quality of the programme, producer, designer, lighting engineer, wardrobe and make-up

supervisors and vision control supervisor with his remote controls, sit close enough to talk together and compare notes directly without moving from their seats. This incredible building, a monument to the advance of B.B.C. and World Television was set in motion on this June night of 1960, twenty-seven years after Freddie Baxter and Bill Lewis, two Bethnal Green boxers, had been obliged to fight in dim lighting when the B.B.C. first televised boxing in 1933. The curious effect during the fight reminded one critic of Charlie Chaplin on the skating rink. This is, indeed, a scientific achievement of the highest class in a bare quarter of a century, for valuable years were lost between 1939 and 1945. The pre-war slogan—"Television is here, you can't close your eyes to it"—has become abundantly true.



RICHARD DIMBLEBY, C.B.E.

GILBERT  
HARDING

GREAT NAMES  
OF  
B.B.C. TELEVISION

ERIC  
ROBINSON

TONY HANCOCK



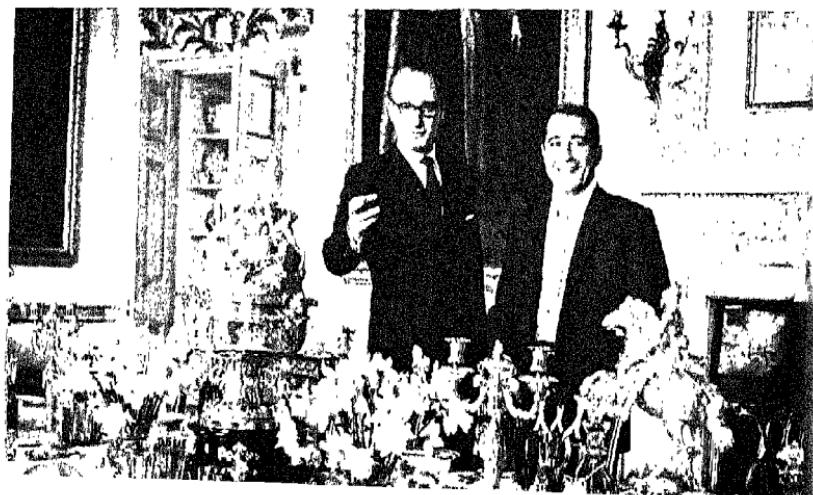
FIONNÁN ANDREW



CLIFF MICHELMORE—and the next "Tonight" will be Tomorrow night.

MERRY COMO visited Britain in April, 1960, to record a programme for B.B.C. Television.

MR COMO surveys "the best silver" at the home of the DUKE OF BEDFORD—Woburn Abbey, which has been the seat of the DUKES OF BEDFORD for nearly 400 years. "Fantastic," said MR C.



## CHAPTER XIII: THE B.B.C. TODAY—AND TOMORROW

*The news . . . recording . . . sport . . . natural history . . . religion . . . Television promotions . . . the language . . . the future with emphasis on colour.*

“**H**ERE is the News”, behind these four words lies one of the most comprehensive operations in the whole structure of the B.B.C.s Television Service. In August, 1958, when Stuart Hood was appointed Deputy Editor News, he later combined the office with direct control of Television News. Now he is to become B.B.C. Controller of Television in succession to Kenneth Adam, the new Director, upon the retirement of Sir Gerald Beadle. Stuart Hood joined the B.B.C. after an adventurous war-time career in the Army. He was captured during the retreat to Alamein in 1942 and taken to Italy. He escaped and for many months operated behind the lines with the Partisans. His companions were Jugoslavs, Italians, Poles, Russians and South Africans, all men mighty quick on the draw. These guerilla fighters were in constant danger as they made their way on foot from the north right down Italy. There were sudden and violent engagements with the enemy; often they had to go into hiding. Hood had no identification papers, but was able to receive messages from the Allies—some through the B.B.C. He came through the lines to safety in Siena in 1944—but only after a remarkable adventure in which the Fascist Mayor, under threat of what might happen to him when the Allies arrived, was forced to enrol Hood into the Siena Police Force and provide him with a police identification card. The first man Hood met when he joined his own lines was Wynford Vaughan Thomas. Such is the quality of the man destined to become Controller of Television, well able, one imagines, to deal with the guerillas of Shepherd’s Bush!

This quietly spoken Scot from Edinburgh University has played a role in Television "News" comparable to that of a National Newspaper editor. He has been after scoops always with a trump card in his hand to play over Fleet Street—a Newsflash can be inserted into television almost at a moment's notice. Cliff Michelmore was once handed a message during one of the "Tonight" programmes—"I have just been given some shocking news," he said. The news was the sudden death of Gilbert Harding. The evening papers by this time were all on the streets; the morning's were not due for several hours.

So as to ensure the widest possible coverage an enormously expensive system is constantly operating; it even includes an aeroplane standing-by at the ready to get airborne at once to any location where a story might have broken. The pilot might be idle for long periods—so is a life-belt, but its value when a man is drowning is beyond price; similarly with the aeroplane.

The Regions play an important part in the composition of the National News. If, for instance, a ship was sinking off the Cornish coast, an aircraft would not be despatched from London. West Region would be asked to co-operate. This system of using the Regions as contributors to the National network works on a reciprocal basis. London often covers events exclusively for the Regions. If the Regions have something of their own which they feel is worthy of injecting into the National News, they would advise London.

The method of covering the whole country with on-the-spot-cameras is the Stringer system. Stringers are free-lance camera-men up and down the country (they are strung out—hence the name "Stringers"), and it is their job to cover a specified area. The good Stringer will need no telling when a story breaks, he is on the spot ahead of the B.B.C.s call to him. With over fifty of these Stringers the B.B.C.s coverage is extensive. Scoops, of course, are few and far between; their ingredients are a measure of good fortune allied to the enterprise and technical skill of the camera-man. One such scoop was the return to London airport from Australia of a very special R.A.F. Valiant Bomber. The B.B.C. had a man on the spot to film the landing, and intuition told him not to hang about the airport buildings but to get out and about. The Valiant crashed on landing with a Senior Staff Officer on board. The camera-man was at the scene of the crash with the fire-

tender, and took his pictures. Immediately picture-taking was banned but the B.B.C. film was already on its way to Alexandra Palace for transmission in the next "News" Bulletin.

When a piece of film arrives at Alexandra Palace it is taken first to the processing department where it is processed in precisely the same way as any ordinary piece of film. The film, when developed, is then shown in the Review Theatre in the presence of film editors and sub-editors. They will decide how to treat the story; the film editor then disappears to the cutting room; the sub-editor to the news room to write his story. In one of the eleven cutting rooms the film is projected on to a small screen; it can be moved backwards or forwards and can be stopped merely by taking a foot off a pedal. Each news story consists of so many shots. A politician giving a speech might consist of shots of him arriving; taking his place on the platform, and then shots of audience reaction during the speech—smiles, frowns, heckling. These shots are hung up like Monday's washing and then have to be married with the sub-editor's commentary. When this has been done the film is spliced together by means of a foot splicer. This process is happening simultaneously with half a dozen or more stories so that the next process is the joining operation which is done in the make-up cutting room. Never, however, is a sequence of stories joined into one complete roll of film as precautions have to be taken for the acceptance of late news on the basis of a newspaper fudge system. On one occasion the film of a bank raid was being processed at half-past five; it was shown on the "News" at eight minutes past six.

Day by day the various "News" Bulletins are scheduled to last for a prescribed time. From experience the experts know just how many items can be included in a given period. If it was decided that the six o'clock "News" would include fourteen items, the "News" Reader would read the news from fourteen sheets of paper each carrying a coloured strip at the top representing the particular bulletin. It might be red for six o'clock and green for ten o'clock so that a six o'clock "News" Reader with a green strip at the top of one of the sheets would treat it as a gatecrasher and have it quickly replaced. The production staff for a "News" Bulletin begin with a quantity of blank sheets of paper each numbered, shall we say, from one to fourteen. When a typescript sheet appears the blank is discarded. The anchor man is the

"News" Reader himself. If he is about to go on the air with three blank sheets either he is in trouble or three late items will be handed to him during the bulletin.

The controlling staff in the gallery will number as many as fifteen and will be made up of the Senior Television Engineer in charge of the technical production engineering staff; the vision mixer; the production assistant; the production assistant's secretary; the news editorial staff who have decided upon the formula of presentation; the camera control units and the sound mixer. Ten monitors are installed in the gallery. Most of the news might be illustrated by film. One item might involve an insert from Cardiff on the Ebbw Vale election result; when the switch is made a cue-light warns the announcer ten seconds in advance of the camera coming back to him.

Statistical information is often brightened up by the use of animated drawings. Some of these captions are handwritten; others are produced by the Caption Department on the inlay press, a process basically similar to a printer setting up type. The complete team—including engineers, editorial, film editors, film camera-men, film-coverage organizers, projection staff, messengers delivering scripts, list operators conveying bodies, and the very necessary brigade of tea-makers—numbers in the region of 100. The officer commanding the technical side is the Senior News Engineer—Harry Goodings, the master of a wide field of technical developments, a man with an extraordinary depth of knowledge, yet at the same time giving the impression that he might just as easily have made his mark in light entertainment. One modern development at Goodings's disposal is Cable Film, a process first used when Her Majesty opened the St Lawrence Seaway in 1959; it is a method of bringing news, photographically across the Atlantic, by use of cables. This method was devised and perfected by the Research Department of the B.B.C. but because of the high cost of transmission it is used most sparingly and only for matters of great National or World importance.

A technical demand is the narrowing of the bandwidth and this is accomplished by sending at a very slow pace, so slow, in fact, that one minute of film takes 100 minutes to send. The cable cost is £2 a minute, so that transmitting one minute of film costs £200 for cable alone without additional hidden costs. The G.P.O. require

approximately six to eight hours' notice to make a cable available. During the American Presidential elections cable-film transmissions were relayed some half a dozen times in the space of forty-eight hours. It might not have been used again for months as it is cheaper to fly film across if the need is not desperately urgent.

Stuart Hood used to hold a conference at a quarter past ten to find out what was cooking and to deal with problems of policy. One such problem arose when Podola was hanged. Film taken of demonstrators outside the prison included a shot of a Contract News Reader known, of course, to the B.B.C. staff. Should it be shown or not? It was. Points of law have to be watched most carefully. Film, for instance, cannot be shot within the precincts of the Old Bailey; establishing identity in the case of a suspected criminal is another touchy legal point.

The impact which B.B.C. Television "News" has had on newspaper treatment of news stories is quite appreciable. Arthur Christiansen—"Chris", the man who, with "The Beaver", built the *Daily Express*, whose story was told in the B.B.C.s "This is Your Life", and the man, who, in the minds of many of his colleagues, is the greatest living newspaper genius, made this observation: "What is going to happen when the TV planners give more and more time to news and news off-shoot programmes. What is going to happen when TV news programmes are made entertaining as well as informative? Recently TV newsreels animated the South Coast bank killing, the Marilyn Monroe divorce, and the de Gaulle Paris riots in one programme with such force that only one newspaper succeeded in looking fresh the next morning. The others were pathetic. Here is a challenge that the newspapers must—and can—accept, both in the development of reporting techniques as well as in printing and display."

Those concerned with the collation and production of "News" Bulletins set themselves a high target of efficiency; it calls for top speed working and so, to quote one of them, "Gives us a high muck-up potential." Mistakes, of course, are made, but they are few and far between. The number of "News" Readers is increasing. The public, however, will remember most the names of Robert Dougal, Kenneth Kendall and Richard Baker. "Here is the News", read by any one of them, has a friendly air about it. They have borne good, bad, and

indifferent tidings with dignity and understanding; they have been an integral part of television as a whole, and the friends of millions of viewers.

\* \* \*

The whole face of television production has changed in the wake of the advance of recording apparatus. At the present moment, approximately one-third of the B.B.C.'s television programmes are recordings. In the United States very few live programmes are transmitted apart from news and some current affairs items. The advantages of Tele-Cine (the transmission of film) and Video Tape recording are tremendous. Today the Ampex system of recording has virtually revolutionized television. The word "Ampex" owes its origin to the initials of its inventor and promoter A. M. Poniatoff; "ex" for excellent has been added—hence "Ampex". Poniatoff was engaged in the United States during the war on Government contracts. When the war ended so did the contracts; he then turned his attention to sound recorders and built up a good business; when receiving a letter from a schoolmaster suggesting that, in his opinion, recording was a system which could be adapted for television, Poniatoff replied "Come and join me". The schoolmaster, Charles P. Ginsburg, came . . . now the Company has twelve divisions. The B.B.C. alone has fourteen Ampex recorders, each costing about £30,000, a total of nearly £500,000.

To the television producer, being able to record programmes is a great lessening of production burdens. He can shoot at any time when the artistes and the studio are free, especially in an off-peak studio time; he can edit mistakes; he can wait for costume changes; he can re-group his cameras if he is moving his sets. Whilst film on 16 or 35 millimetres, which, although it has to be processed, is easy to edit, Ampex, which produces its results immediately, is a highly expensive editing proposition. In fact the Americans have found that the lavish use of studio and video tape editing facilities has increased the cost of the larger programmes to such an extent that it is now virtually as cheap to make these programmes on film, in film studios. A sponsored network is in a difficult position since it has no control over the sponsor or the independent producer, and cannot dictate simpler techniques involving fewer re-takes. There is also the major problem of making satisfactory copies of video tape recordings. When using Ampex the B.B.C.

regard the operation as, to all intents and purposes, a live operation. Only in exceptional circumstances would they edit. One advantage of Ampex is that it can be inserted. In other words it would be possible to Ampex and insert the second act into an otherwise live three-act play.

The advantages and possibilities of recording programmes was seen, even in the old 30-line days, and since the bandwidth then was only 13 kc/s per second this could be done by recording on a gramophone disk. The coming of high-definition television in 1936 raised the bandwidth of 3 Mc/s per second, and put paid to any form of tele-recording in this country until 1947. Then, after a suggestion by Philip Dorte, first attempts were made by using a standard 35 mm cine camera. A 405-line picture is transmitted at the rate of 25 pictures per second. Each picture is made up of two 202½-line fields, the second of which is interlaced between the lines of the first; each field is scanned in 1/50th of a second. A cine camera normally runs at 24 frames per second. This one was run at 25 to bring it into synchronism with the television picture rate. The film was exposed to one television field and blacked out during the next one; during the black-out period the film was moved up one frame, so that only half the information was recorded. In other words if the film showed a man raising his arm from his waist above his head in six movements, only three of the movements would be recorded. Surprisingly this omission was not quite as serious as it might appear on paper, but it did introduce enough loss to have stimulated concentrated research into ways and means of recording every field, while at the same time permitting the film to move on at an average speed of 25 frames per second.

The Mechau was the first camera to permit every television field to be recorded. It was an optically compensated projector which produced a continuous and stationary image from a film moving at constant speed. In other words it started life as a projector and not as a camera. Three B.B.C. engineers, H. W. Baker, D. R. Campbell and H. G. Whiting, proposed in 1948 that the Mechau be operated in reverse as a camera. In this way a stationary picture displayed on a cathode ray tube could be recorded on film moving at constant speed. With this arrangement, exposure is taking place continuously and all 405-lines are recorded. This system was used in the Coronation of 1953, and was the

first tele-recording to be flown across the Atlantic and transmitted the same day in Canada and the United States.

Magnetic tape recorders have been in common use in sound broadcasting since about the end of the war. It was not until 1956 that successful machines for recording television were put into service in this country.

In deciding whether to record on tape or film, cost and quality are the deciding factors. The cost of 35 mm film is about £180 per hour; 16 mm film, about £50. Video tape about £120, but it can be re-used many times provided it is not cut and rejoined too often. On quality, video tape recordings are slightly superior to 35 mm film recordings made on the best equipment, and substantially superior to 16 mm. They are already of such high quality that programmes can be recorded from tape to film without too much loss. Most domestic recordings are now made on video tape, and 35 mm film is employed mainly for recordings which require considerable editing or which have to be stored for a long time. Unquestionably 16 mm film will continue to be used for overseas recordings because of its cheapness and convenience—particularly when a number of prints are required, and also because of the universal adaptability of 16 mm tele-cine equipments.

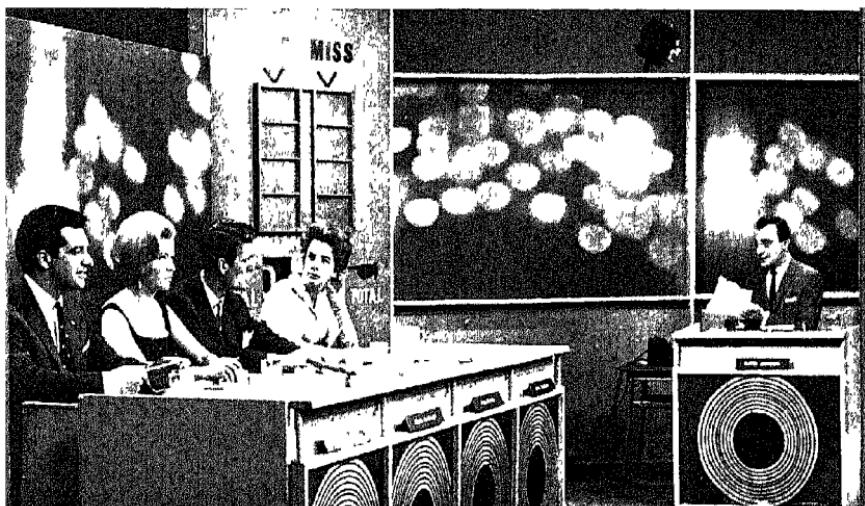
The demand for recordings from Commonwealth and other English speaking countries is increasing rapidly, so that intensive efforts are being made to increase the quality of 16 mm recordings for this type of programme. There are still, however, two distinct camps, divided quite substantially, on the merits of live or recorded programmes. One producer has said that he much prefers to produce live; admittedly mistakes creep in, but often in a play the fact that a small mistake has been made stimulates the artistes to a greater performance, just as a football team a goal down is spurred to greater effort. The Hancock shows are all recorded but the antics of Headmaster Edwards and poor miserable Pettigrew (Arthur Howard) at Chislebury School are live, mainly because Jimmy Edwards is that sort of comedian who can ad-lib away from the script if he finds audience reaction favourable to him.

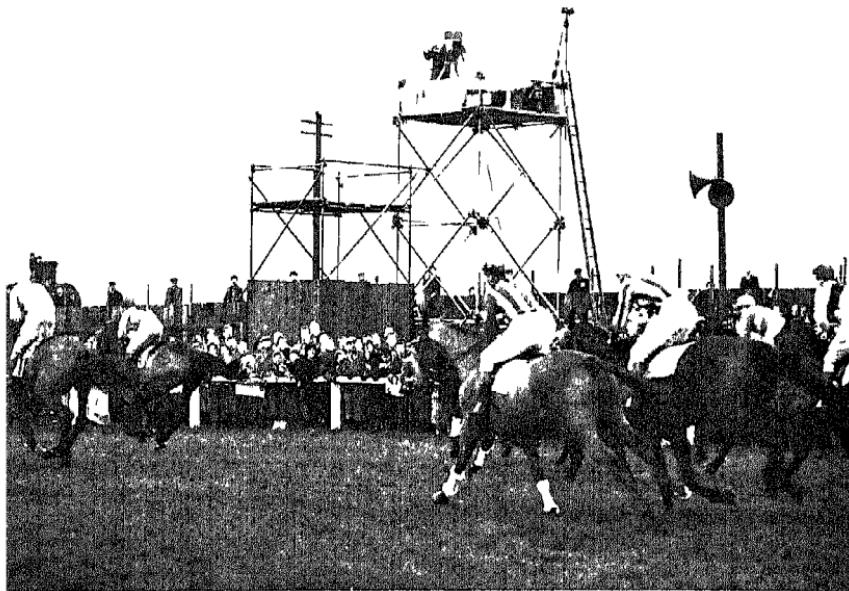
The master mind behind the whole of the B.B.C.'s recording operations is Jim Redmond, Superintendent Engineer Television (Recording). Redmond has travelled the world to acquaint himself with every



GEORGE CHISHOLM, presented with the *Melody Makers* Award for Britain's top trombonist in 1960 appears with his Jazzers in the "Black and White Minstrel Show"

FRANKIE VAUGHAN, GLORIA DE HAVEN, PETE MURRAY and JUNE THORBURN on the panel of "Juke Box Jury", with Master of Ceremonies, DAVID JACOBS, the Variety Club's Television Personality of the year in 1960





#### THE GRAND NATIONAL

The BBC camera brought the Grand National to viewers for the first time in March, 1960. This picture shows the camera position at Beech's Brook where plenty of action is assured.

#### THE BOAT RACE

An amazing picture of the Oxford crew disappearing below the water in the Boat Race of 1951 when they sank in front of the boathouses at Putney. JOHN SNAGG's dramatic words "Oxford are sinking" "Oxford are practically down" "they have got waterlogged and are sinking" told the world of the end of the shortest University boat race. This historic picture was taken from the television screen.

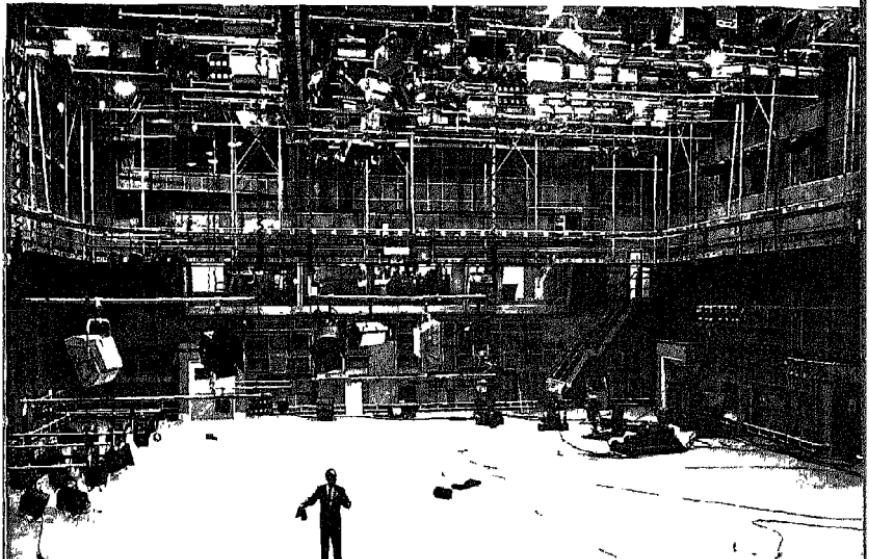




A break in rehearsal for the first studio production from the new Television Centre in June, 1960. DAVID NIXON, GRAEME MUIR (producer), ARTHUR ASKEY, ERIC ROBINSON, RICHARD HEARNE, ELIZABETH LARNER, ERIC MASCHEWITZ (Head of Light Entertainment) and LESLIE MITCHELL (in at the beginning in 1936 and still there in 1960)

#### HOW BIG IS A LITTLE MAN?

ARTHUR ASKEY, just over half an inch high in this picture, stands alone in the new massive Studio Three

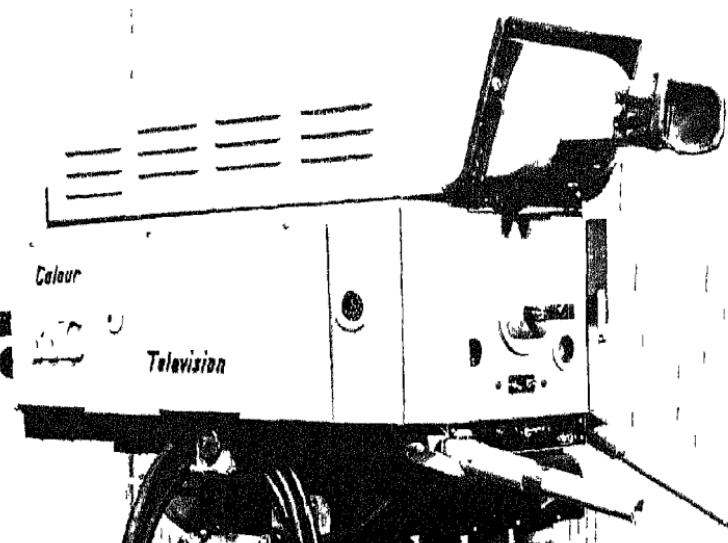


## COLOUR TELEVISION

A demonstration of experimental colour television was given to members of the House of Parliament on Wednesday and Thursday 30 and 31 January 1957. This picture shows CAROLE CARR in the Colour Television studio at Alexandra Palace.



A three-tube colour camera in use at Alexandra Palace is in back in 1955. It was on 7 October 1954 that the first compatible type of colour television picture was radiated from the medium-power transmitter at Alexandra Palace. By the autumn of 1956 Studio A at Alexandra Palace had been equipped with a second experimental colour camera.



development in his field. Although he is not concerned with the making of films—that is in the competent hands of J. H. Mewett, Head of Film Department—Redmond is responsible for the maintenance of all the film equipment. It might not be generally realized that the B B C. is the biggest film-making organization in the world. It has between 160 and 170 film cameras (the average film company has ten or twelve). It has three film studios at Ealing with sixty cutting rooms, with all the programme teams expecting the full range of facilities. There might be a camera team on safari, others might be in action anywhere in the world in the interests of “Panorama” or “Tonight”. There might be a piece of drama required for a play in three weeks’ time, “Sports Special” are perhaps covering three football matches each necessitating two cameras. There could be one or two inserts required for the “News”. In the month of August, 1960, no fewer than 121 recordings were made on video tape, fifty-one on 35 mm film, and ninety-four on 16 mm, representing 294,000 ft of negative. The total footage of negative and print handled by the tele-recording cutting room was 433,000. If it were stretched out in one piece, it would take Stirling Moss over half an hour to drive from one end to the other in a racing car!<sup>1</sup>

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When the Guild of Television Producers and Directors announced in 1960 that the winners of their current event productions award was a quartet—the production teams of the B.B C.s “Sportsview” and Olympic Games presentation—they were bestowing a richly deserved honour upon those engaged in a vital aspect of world television. “Where would television be,” it is so often said, “without its sport?” The winners of this award were Bryan Cowgill (Producer), Paul Fox (Editor), Ronnie Noble (Assistant-Editor), and Jack Oaten (Administrator). “Sportsview”, “Sports Special”, “Grandstand”, and innumerable outside broadcasts provide the viewers with approximately seven hours of topical sport a week—cricket, football, rugby, flat racing, jumping, athletics, boxing, tennis, show jumping, swimming, golf, speedway racing are just part of an immense sporting panorama.

“Sportsview”—now past its 300th edition—and Peter Dimmock, have become indivisible. Dimmock has been the rock upon which the programme was founded and has since prospered. The contention that

if the public see too much of a face they eventually tire of it is thrown overboard in a number of the top B.B.C. programmes. "This is Your Life" without Eamonn Andrews; "Tonight" without Cliff Michelmore, "Panorama" without Richard Dimbleby and "Sportsview" without Peter Dimmock would lose much of their character. If the viewers like the programme, they like to identify a personality with it, provided, of course, they like the personality. Dimmock travels extensively and does miss a few programmes, but his deputy, however competent, is always at pains to assure the viewer that Peter Dimmock will be back next week.

"Grandstand", a four hour programme on a Saturday afternoon has done as much as anything over the years to change the habits of Britain's sports-watchers. Whereas, Saturday afternoon was once a ritual of standing on the terraces at a football match irrespective of weather conditions and quality of entertainment, the mood has changed now to one of discrimination. There is not the slightest decline in interest in Britain for any of the major sports, but the alternative of "Grandstand" when the weather is bad and the match at the local ground none too attractive, makes "Grandstand" the winner every time. Merely being in the "Grandstand" studio on a Saturday afternoon is a most exhausting business for the onlooker. For Producer Bryan Cowgill and Commentator David Coleman it is high pressure stuff all the time. When "Grandstand" goes off the air each week the vision mixer looks closely at Cowgill's hair and remarks with unfailing regularity—"Yes, it's there" . . . the one grey hair that Cowgill adds to his collection every Saturday afternoon! The "Grandstand" studio is the one used by "Tonight" during the week; in size it is approximately 75 x 40 ft and assembled in it on Saturdays are nine teleprinters, four telephone positions, three cameras, six football results boards, a rugby results board, three monitors with the necessary personnel to operate them. John Langham reads the news and the racing and Rugby League results; Leonard Martin the football results. Leonard Martin's voice is a familiar one to all sportsviewers. He is used for dubbing many of the commentaries on to sporting films.

"Grandstand" rehearsal begins at 10.30 a.m. Coleman wears a chest microphone and what was once a deaf-aid which has been adapted to become a radio receiver. The floor manager, wearing headphones

(as he is not seen), is also in touch with the producer by this method. Should the producer want to speak to anyone else he uses a telephone. I sat behind Cowgill in the gallery when "Grandstand" No. 129 went on the air on Saturday, 14 January 1961, when the big talking point in sport was the possibility of a footballers' strike. A last minute approach to Jimmy Hill, the Players' Representative, had induced him to appear and he was interviewed by David Coleman as an extra item in the programme. It was a good interview. Hill, a fluent speaker, was making his point and was still talking at eight minutes to three, but there were twenty-three runners in the three o'clock race at Birmingham and Peter O'Sullivan would have to give the runners and riders before the "Off". Time was becoming desperate. Coleman, as relaxed and efficient as ever in front of the viewers, was getting a barrage of instructions from his producer over his microphone to wind the interview up. After Birmingham, over to an indoor Athletics Meeting at Stanmore where runners disappeared outside the double doors of a huge hangar after breaking the tapes because of lack of space in which to pull up and pole-vaulters popped round corners at intervals. Never have I seen an imitation of a distinguished sport bordering so much on the ridiculous. I was waiting for Peter West, the commentator, to tell us which lane Charlie Drake would be in! The viewer was only given a limited ration of this. The football strike, the racing results at Birmingham and Sandown, Danny Clapton's early goal for Arsenal against Manchester City, and Warwickshire's fate in the County Rugby Championship were given greater prominence because of their relative news values. In addition the "Grandstand" skating competition was in progress at Whitley Bay with Alan Weeks as commentator. After what had seemed an afternoon of organized chaos sleeves were rolled up for "Operation Finale"—the results. A camera is placed a little less than 12 in. away from one of the teleprinters, and David Coleman reads off the results as they come; simultaneously a team of men behind the score-boards are inserting the results of the matches ready for Leonard Martin when he reads the classified results. Coleman has previously made exhaustive study of the League tables; of home or away unbeaten records; of transferred players making their first appearance for a new club, so as to enable him to comment intelligently as he reads a result. The producer, seeing the results boards,

which Coleman cannot, when he is reading off the teleprinter, might say to him on his microphone "There seem to be a lot of draws, David". Coleman would then make this comment to the viewers. The tempo now has hotted up. "The Southampton result is not on the board" screams Cowgill a few seconds before Martin is due to read the classified results—it was soon there! At a few seconds to five, Coleman, composed, looking unruffled, although sweating under the intense heat of the lights for over four hours, said with a smile, "And that's it from this edition of 'Grandstand', but we will be back at 12.30 next Saturday for another four and a half hours of the best in sport, including the Wales v England rugby international and, for Scottish viewers, the big match at Murrayfield between Scotland and South Africa. Until then it's Good-bye from me . . ."

What a relief it was to get out again and breathe the pure natural air of Shepherd's Bush! Day was by no means done, however, for the sports staff. They still had "Today's Sport" at 5.53 p.m. introduced by Kenneth Wolstenholme, the B.B.C.s top football specialist, and then "Sports Special" at ten o'clock. It's a hard life!

Originally it was thought that "Grandstand" was so unique in its presentation and technical requirements that it would be as well to keep the same technical crew each week. Then it became just another programme which any studio crew could be expected to handle. The studio crew in action on 14 January had done "The Brains Trust" the previous evening, and were detailed for "Monitor" the next day. Gordie Mackie, Technical Operations Manager, would expect his crew to be able to handle any programme that was put before them.

"Grandstand", always watching for likely material was attracted by a sound programme devised and produced by Michael Hastings called "Sporting Chance" which made a sound début on 16 January 1960 and ran for fourteen programmes. It was an idea, basically on the lines of a quiz, but with an emphasis on audience participation in which teams competed, either on a town or Regional basis. Brian Johnston was the compere, with the setter of questions and scorer—Roy Webber, cricket's incomparable statistician. "Sporting Chance" ran for fourteen weeks in "Grandstand" and resulted in millions becoming all the wiser on laws and sporting history. It then moved straight back to sound. A detailed analysis of the thousands of questions sent in by

viewers showed that nearly 70 per cent were from children between the ages of 11 and 16. The B.B.C. Trophy awarded to the winners—in one case Hatfield—was later proudly put on display in Hatfield Town Hall. Michael Hastings, perhaps, has hit on an idea with a future. “Grandstand’s” future, as a whole, looks good for a lifetime.

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One interesting trend has been the specialization by the Regions in a particular type of programme which they provide for National transmission. The Midland Region are the farming specialists. Agricultural broadcasting started regularly in Great Britain in the autumn of 1934. Now television plays its part in providing the agricultural community with technical information and keeps farmers up to date with market prices and trends, and developments in the agricultural industry generally.

West Region were responsible for the formation of the Natural History Unit in Bristol, and the subsequent presentation of such programmes as “Look” with Peter Scott; “Adventure” with Hans and Lotte Hass; the Armand and Michaela Denis series; “News from the Zoos” with James Fisher, in addition to quite a number of specials and single programme efforts—many of them the work of Tony Soper, who is fast making a considerable reputation. Soper himself is a rare species—a producer, naturalist and cameraman, capable of setting off on a one man expedition. The Natural History Unit does not handle the David Attenborough programmes, which are done from London.

It was Frank Gillard, when Head of Programmes, under Gerald Beadle, then Controller of West Region, who felt that a Region should exploit its own areas, develop the characteristic of that area, and strike out independently. It was Frank Gillard who was responsible for the appointment of Desmond Hawkins as a Features and Documentary Producer, and it was the pioneering work of Hawkins as a producer which led to the setting up of the Natural History Unit in July, 1957. Recently, Desmond Hawkins was awarded the Silver Medal of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (a rare distinction) as recognition of his work. The present Head of the Unit under Mr Hawkins is Dr Bruce Campbell.

The great expansion of television in the 'fifties was a wonderful

opportunity for those who had been specializing in wild life programmes. To the sounds recorded by Ludwig Koch and others a decade before, the camera now added vision. The field for suitable material was literally the world.

There were no problems of translation, of culture barriers; of conflicting tastes; the flight of swans is eloquent in any language and all but universal in its appeal. The needs were simple but exacting. The Unit did not want pictures of startled and disturbed animals, nor of animals in captivity, nor of pets, nor of faked scenes showing untypical behaviour. They were not interested in presenting animals comically, whimsically, sentimentally or sensationaly. They wanted, and still want, film that would take viewers into the animal's natural world, faithfully and completely. Occasionally, the Unit found a ready-made masterpiece. For example, at the International Ornithological Congress in Switzerland in 1954 the films included one of the black woodpecker, made by Heinz Sielmann of Munich. Peter Scott, whose Severn Wild-fowl Trust is about twenty miles from the Bristol Studios, was full of enthusiasm for Sielmann's work and the Unit quickly arranged a showing of this film. The impact was truly remarkable. The programme had hardly ended before the telephone switchboard was jammed with calls from enthusiastic viewers. Wherever he went in England Sielmann was recognized and hailed as "the woodpecker man".

Between 1954 and 1958 the Unit's television policy became stable. They knew they could hold regularly a peak-hour audience of 8,000,000 or 9,000,000 viewers if the programme was good enough, and in Peter Scott, on the doorstep, so to speak, they knew they had a nationally popular figure to act as permanent host on the screen and to talk on level terms with each individual expert.

The Unit is at the disposal of all B.B.C. programme teams. Roger Perry, the librarian, might have as many as half a dozen calls a day for film shots of various animals for other programmes. He once supplied film of penguins for one of Tony Hancock's programmes; it was not regarded as an unusual request, but schools programmes are normally the biggest customers.

It is almost true to say that the sun never sets on the Natural History Unit. At the moment of writing, a three-way arrangement between the B.B.C. Natural History Unit, the Munich Film Institute and Nord-

deutscher Rundfunk, Hamburg, has made it possible for Sielmann to travel to the Galapagos Islands. To do this at his level of thoroughness, involving three cameramen on location for a half a year, suggested a cost more appropriate to the cinema box office than to television; cut into three, however, it was a different proposition altogether. Armand and Michaela Denis are in Africa shooting material for three programmes which will be shown at the time of a Conference to be held this September at Arusha, Tanganyika, launched by U.N.E.S.C.O., to discuss the conservation of African wild life, and to be attended by African political leaders as well as white delegates. If nothing is done about this pressing problem it could be that in two generations we may never again see some animal life in the wild.

Tony Soper, back from one trip off the American Seaboard is off on another in a few months' time; he was ruefully reflecting on a bitter disappointment—the death of the two dolphins which he brought to England—the first ever to come. Dolphins, he says, are the most friendly and intelligent of all animals and are easier to train than a dog. He is emphatic that early pictures depicting people riding on the backs of dolphins could be fact and not fiction; he was anxious to prove it, and so the B.B.C. Natural History Unit bought two dolphins from the fishermen of Cesenatico, an Italian fishing village rather like Looe in Cornwall. Cesenatico has a dolphin tradition. Mussolini once offered a prize for the first dolphin catch; it was won by the fishermen of Cesenatico and ever since, as a matter of pride and tradition, they feel duty-bound to go on catching them. The B.B.C. paid £235 for the two, each about  $8\frac{1}{2}$  ft long. They were flown to Plymouth and in the one week-end they were on view, 8,000 people paid to see them. Alas, they survived only ten days. Autopsies were carried out on the dolphins, one by London University and the other by the London Zoo—one dolphin was old and badly nourished—it would probably not have survived anyway; the other, much younger, still had physical troubles of its own. Soper is keen to have another try with two younger and more vigorous specimens of the dolphin breed. Having learnt underwater swimming to assist in his job, Tony Soper has been in the water with dolphins, and had them begging for food out of his hand within four days, and playing with a ball.

Desmond Hawkins has two ambitions for his wild life programmes.

The first is colour, and the second is his own Field Headquarters in the West country—a sort of sanctuary and observatory. He would like to film the Arctic spring in colour with its wild flowers and migration of birds—a change from winter to spring in a dramatically short time.

The Unit has done much to encourage amateurs, and in conjunction with the Council for Nature ran a competition in 1960 with a prize of £500 for the best amateur film suitable for television. It was won by G. H. Thompson and R. Skinner of the Department of Forestry, Oxford University. The subject, which to many people could hardly have been less attractive, was "The life history of the alder woodwasp and its insect enemies". It was a remarkable film.

Cutting and editing plays a considerable part in nature film production. A thirty-minute programme for television would probably take a month to edit, including the dubbing of the music, which is practically all specially written. One film by an amateur, Eric Ashby, on the New Forest, took two years to make. Patience, and more patience, is the beginning, the middle, and the end, of wild life filming. Its rewards, in terms of personal pleasure and satisfaction, are great.

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Religious broadcasts have been a basic element of B.B.C. policy since the inception of sound radio. This tradition has continued in television, and the value placed upon it by the Church could have no better illustration than the fact that, in 1960, Bristol Cathedral was put at the disposal of the B.B.C. during Holy Week for the production of the medieval French Passion play by the brothers Greban—*The True Mystery of the Passion*. This was a West Region presentation but it was on such a scale that cameras and crew from the Welsh Outside Broadcasts Unit, a special camera crane from the Scottish Unit, and make-up experts from London, were necessary to augment the resources of West Region. The fifty speaking members of the huge cast were rehearsed in London, and after Evening Service in the cathedral on the preceding Sunday of the transmission which took place on Maundy Thursday, riggers and carpenters began erecting scaffolding and towers for lights, microphones, and cameras. Three crosses each about 16 ft high and weighing over 1 cwt, a great throne for Herod, a sedan-type portable throne for Caiaphas, a gibbet, a coffin, a whipping post and a curtained double bed, were made by carpenters in Bristol. The

“props” list called for—one leather purse containing thirty pieces of silver, one thunder sheet (which was on view), one Roman eagle on a tall stand, one crown of thorns, anvil, bellows and hammer, armour and assorted weapons, including a javelin, a crossbow and “a gurt big iron spike”.

Eight make-up girls from London were hard at work during rehearsals and off-stage during transmission, making up the cast and 150 members of the audience who were drawn from local amateur dramatic societies and B.B.C. staff. Classrooms at the Cathedral School became temporary dressing rooms for over 200 people. All were in medieval costume; this applied to everyone involved in the production with the exception of the production staff and engineers in the control room. The designer, floor manager and his assistant, as well as scene shifters were all in costume. A special insurance policy was taken out for the safety of the cathedral as two braziers were being used as well as a dozen torches and a huge bowl of paraffin and methylated spirits to produce “Hell fire” (this, however, was superimposed on the picture and was nowhere near the scene of the actual production).

James Kirkup translated and adapted this moving play which was virtually unknown until Kirkup happened to come across a passage from it in a nineteenth century textbook which he bought for 6d. Later he traced a copy of the great French Mistery cycle, of which this was obviously a small part, in the British Museum. This was the first time that a Passion play had been produced in an English cathedral especially for television. It was an outstanding success not only for the producer, Brandon Acton-Bond, in collaboration with Prebendary Martin Wilson, and the huge cast, but also for Frank Gillard, former B.B.C. war correspondent and now Controller of B.B.C. Television, West Region. It was Gillard who made this unforgettable occasion possible by his conception of it, and by his ability to convince the Church that to give up Bristol Cathedral to television in the Church’s most important week of the year—Holy Week—would prove to be abundantly worth while. Bristol Cathedral, the focal point of Christian thought and worship for a wide area around the city, was brought to the attention of millions of viewers during Holy Week and on Easter Day. “Lift Up Your Hearts” from Monday to Saturday at 6.50 a.m. and 7.50 a.m. was broadcast on sound radio, and three television

presentations—*The True Mystery of the Passion*, Epilogue for Easter Eve, and Sung Eucharist on Easter Sunday, made Bristol a world centre for Christian thought at that time.

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Just how large a part could B.B.C. Television play in the export markets of the world. What potential was there for their programmes in the other television countries? Gerald Beadle, the then Director of Television, who became a knight in the New Year's Honours List of 1961, had given this question a good deal of thought and in 1958 when Ronnie Waldman returned from America after negotiating a new Perry Como series for British television screens, Mr Beadle invited him to dinner, as Waldman thought, to receive an up to the minute report of American Television. The subject, however, was the flying of the British flag in world television. Waldman read a confidential report outlining Beadle's scheme but it was not for a minute or two that the penny dropped and he realized that the position of Business Manager was being offered to him. Conscious of the fact that he has been in at the beginning of the real development of Radio Light Entertainment with "Band Waggon", and of Television Light Entertainment, as its Head, Waldman accepted this first post in the Export Business with the whole world as his oyster. In April, 1960, his department became known as Television Promotions. It constituted a trading organization, an instrument of International relations, with the object of selling B.B.C. Television programmes to the world.

Ronnie Waldman's name will long be remembered for his role in the development of Television Light Entertainment. In 1950 Light Entertainment scarcely existed on television. There were only four producers and good artistes and writers were loath to risk their reputations in a medium where even the producers were feeling their way; it was nearly a case of the blind leading the blind. By 1958, when Waldman moved on, the number of producers had increased to twenty-one. Comedy on television has many hazards and heartaches but Waldman, as it happened, had two early strokes of television luck, or was it his unique flair for spotting and appreciating undeveloped talent? He saw a comedian who had an act with a German professor; there have been acts like this by the dozen before, but with the indivi-

dual concerned Waldman sensed a warmth of personality, likeability, and believeability; here was talent worth grooming, unspoiled and ready to learn. The comedian appeared once a month for a couple of years—and had then earned his own show—“The Benny Hill Show”. The comedian with the German professor act was now and still is a talented artiste.

At about the same time that Hill was discovered for the television screens, Albert Stevenson, then a Production Assistant, now a Producer, told Waldman that one of the members of the Morton Fraser Harmonica Group had left the act to go solo. “To do what?” asked Waldman . . . “To become a comic” was the reply. “Go and have a look at him” was Waldman’s comment. He was seen at the Metropolitan in the Edgware Road and in the third week of his solo programme he was booked for “Music Hall”. The act was built round a small boy in a shopping queue. Waldman watched the rehearsal. The next turn was a Cuban juggler who spoke no English. Eric Robinson, Director of Music, spoke no Cuban, the result was a riot. Everybody watching went into hysterics except the now solo member of the Morton Fraser Harmonica Group who watched expressionless. Waldman was surprised that a comedian of all people was not amused; he wondered if something was afoot; it was—the comedian turned up next time with a screamingly funny Cuban juggler act; as a result, Dave King had arrived, another fine performer with a keen observation of real life and great expression, who was later given his own show.

Light Entertainment in the modern idiom has come the full circle from the old rough and tumble music-hall days. The comedian now has to be more than a slap-stick comic, he has to be a comedy actor. The script-writers, too, have to produce material very different from the gags which were trotted out nightly on the halls in the old days from Exeter to Wigan. Frank Muir and Denis Norden, now Script Supervisory Editors for Light Entertainment, prove this point with their skilful handling of “Whacko” in which most of the funniest moments are ideas rather than people. Simpson and Galton and Muir and Norden are the top four in television scripting. A variety of reasons have been suggested over the years for the lack of outstanding script-writers in this country. Insufficient financial reward has been mentioned but this point holds little water these days. Why are the Americans more

profuse in the script business; admittedly, with their vast networks more money is available, but one of the reasons, perhaps, was the fact that the American Variety Theatre dried up. The new medium of television had to be learned or else the performers stopped eating, and a hungry man has a greater incentive to make the best of opportunities. Light Entertainment in this country has kept pace with events. The popularity of David Nixon, of Eric Sykes and Hattie Jacques, of Billy Cotton who found the need to adapt himself to the demands of television, are a few cases in point.

Now, Waldman has moved away from the edge of the footlights, but he is finding even greater excitement in his selling organization which is now large enough to be divided into five departments, each with a manager at its head. Sales do the selling; Purchasing does the buying; Transcription is the department responsible for seeing that every programme is on the right line-standards for the country to which it is being exported, to clear all copyrights, and to deliver the programme in good order ready for transmission.

The Specialized unit is responsible for making programmes for abroad such as the General Election in four languages; it does all the foreign languages dubbing, and the compilation of pieces within a programme. It might be that "Monitor" could not be exported as a whole programme because the B.B.C. did not own the copyright of some of the items; these would have to be extracted. Similarly, with "Panorama", which incidentally, can be shown on British television screens on a Monday night and in Australia on Thursday or Friday with some of the items edited out, such is the pace of the modern world of television. The Business department contains the financial wizards, and the Executive Producer is used when a film is being made with a film company. These then are the five prongs of Promotions.

How much ground had the B.B.C. to make up when Promotions got under way? Three Australian stations were once using over 100 American programmes a week. Yet within six months of starting the B.B.C. were exporting to between thirty and forty countries. *Science for the Sixth Form* proved just as much a commercial product as Hancock. Hancock, incidentally, was a winner in Canada; but so far, not in America, where the Sponsors take the view that he wouldn't be understood in the Middle West, and the Middle West provides vast

potential for the advertisers. "Age of Kings", and "Face to Face" have played leading roles in the export business. What is thought likely to produce the largest revenue, is, if and when "Maigret", starring Rupert Davies, is exported, the B.B.C. hope, to the enormous American network—B.B.C., C.B.S. and A.B.C. the three American giants.

The Americans are interested in series of twenty-six programmes, so business will not be discussed until twenty-six in the "Maigret" series are in the cans. So great a potential did the B.B.C. see for "Maigret", that pauses were deliberately written into the script at tense moments, so as to provide spaces for the commercials to be inserted if America buys. In July, 1960, New Zealand alone transmitted 140 B.B.C. programmes, and the United Arab Republic put out forty. The orders now are coming faster than the productions. What is happening to the money jingling into the B.B.C. till? It is being ploughed back into the business. A now rapidly expanding business.

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Television, by the way, has a language all its own. Who, on the outside has the foggiest idea what an animation bench is, or an apple-and-biscuit microphone; a barn door or a beanstalk; a cabot's quilt or a howl-back; a mush area or a pot cut; a scissors cross or a snoot. For those who would like to know, it is quite simple. An animation bench is a structure consisting of a film camera mounting and either an easel or a platform, used for the purpose of making a moving picture by photographing in sequence either a series of stationary drawings or objects or a single object in a number of different positions (what could you have more straightforward than that?) . . . an apple-and-biscuit microphone is a type of omni-directional moving microphone (so called because of its shape)—a barn door is an adjustable fitting applied to an illuminator to produce a beam of rectangular cross-section, the dimensions of which can be varied. This phraseology is a hideous reminder of those care-worn days when such a statement of fact usually ended with disagreeable words like these—"Calculate what the dimension would be in cubic feet at half past three on Wednesday if only three men were digging the trench instead of four"—a tricky problem invariably tackled by sucking the top of the pen and looking out of the window! A beanstalk has nothing to do with Jack, it is a

mobile platform, capable of being raised or lowered hydraulically—a cabot's quilt is a sound-absorbing material consisting of dried seaweed sewn between layers of canvas—a howl-back, well, can you take your minds back to ITMA for a moment? "What is it, Sam?" "Well, boss, it's a cacophony produced by retroacting, either acoustic or electric, between the output and the input of a channel containing one or more amplifiers." "Quite simple," quips Tommy, "a howl-back!" He would have been right.

A mush area is a region in which fading and distortion occur owing to interaction between waves from two or more synchronized transmitters—a pot cut is a brief interruption during the reproduction of a recording, made by fading it out and then in again by means of a potentiometer—a scissors cross is a simultaneous movement of two actors in opposite directions across the scene and a snoot is an adjustable fitting applied to an illuminator so as to vary the size and shape of the cross-section of the beams.

There is still a list of words awaiting definition, they have been listed but not yet considered by the Glossary Committee—Hell-blattschreiber is one of them, presumably it must be short for something! Words used by producers and technicians in moments of stress are not included in any section of the Glossary; these, one imagines, would be rather more the concern of the Public Prosecutor than the Glossary Committee, and thus their legitimacy in the hands of a jury, is purely a matter of speculation! It seems quite clear from all this that a well equipped modern linguist might perhaps speak French, German, Russian, Gaelic and Television! If he did he could get a job anywhere.

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The past has gone; by tomorrow the present will have gone, too. We are left then only with the future. What does the future hold for television? Clearly, much of it is at present in the hands of the Pilkington Committee, set up by the Government under the Chairmanship of Sir Harry Pilkington. This Committee is likely to announce its findings in April, 1962. The possibilities which lie ahead are the introduction of colour; more networks so as to provide a wider choice of programmes, and programmes of a more local character; a change in line standards from 405 to 625-line, the standard in existence on the Continent;

there is toll or “pay-as-you-view” television; there is the attractive possibility of satellite television—sending up a satellite fitted with reflecting aerials so that a television beam can be bounced back over an area depending on the height of the satellite. In effect, it would act as a fantastically high television mast; the perfection of this method could span the Atlantic and make cable film obsolete.

The viewer is interested in just one word of all this—colour—this one word has produced vastly differing camps of opinion at all levels. Many people outside the industry are asking why it is, if the B.B.C. are as progressive in thought as they claim to be, that they have done nothing about colour television. The answer is, of course, that they have done a very great deal about colour television; they can do no more now to shape its destiny except to await the recommendations of the Pilkington Committee.

The B.B.C. has been carrying out research and development on colour television since the resumption of the television service after the war. In the early post-war years an experimental sequential system with mechanical colour separation was developed, and a considerable amount of research was carried out on the fundamentals of trichromatic colorimetry as applied to television. By 1953, the consensus of opinion was that no public colour television service could be contemplated unless it were compatible, in other words, the transmissions were of a form which would enable existing monochrome receivers to produce black and white pictures without any modification. It seemed unlikely that compatibility would be achieved with any system which was not effectively simultaneous, and the first report of the Television Advisory Committee pointed out that the impossibility of increasing the channel spacing in Band I (41–68 Mc/s) would necessitate a fully compatible system if colour transmissions were made in this band. Towards the end of 1953 the B.B.C. Research Department undertook to develop and examine the properties of an adaptation of the American N.T.S.C. fully compatible simultaneous colour television system to the British 405-line standard.

On 7 October 1954, the first “compatible” type of colour television picture was radiated from the medium-power transmitter at Alexandra Palace. Another feather in the cap of dear old “Ally Pally”; the early public showing of television for the Radio Show in 1936; the opening

of the first television service in the world on 2 November 1936, and now first with colour in England. On this historic occasion only one colour television receiver, so far as is known, displayed the pictures, but there was a fair size audience viewing the compatible black and white pictures in their homes on normal domestic television receivers. Although many hundreds of tests were subsequently necessary to prove the point, it seemed to the observers of this first transmission, which was a co-operative effort of the Research Department of the B.B.C. Engineering Division and Marconi's Wireless Telegraph Company, that in this N.T.S.C. system there existed a standard capable of providing excellent colour pictures and compatible ones of good quality.

During the winter of 1955-6 a regular series of transmissions was radiated from the medium-power transmitter at Alexandra Palace, to test the quality of the black and white picture on a large number of domestic receivers. Slides and pictures from 16-mm motion film were used. This time the equipment used was of B.B.C. design and manufacture. In the meantime, Studio A at Alexandra Palace had been equipped with a single colour camera of Marconi design, and the first occasion on which colour pictures including scenes from the studio were broadcast was on 3 April and 4 April 1956, during a special demonstration for delegates of the Comité Consultatif International des Radiocommunications, who were visiting this country as part of a world-wide assessment of the state of development of colour television.

By the autumn of 1956, Studio A had been equipped with a second experimental colour camera and, a little later, a 35-mm Cintel film scanner was installed to supplement the slide and 16mm film scanner. With this equipment and with the enthusiastic help of a small group of programme people, an ambitious and comprehensive series of programmes was broadcast, this time from the Crystal Palace transmitter, in the winter of 1956-7 and was viewed in ordinary homes on specially developed experimental colour receivers and on large numbers of black and white domestic sets. The name of S. N. Watson, of the Designs Department of the B.B.C. Engineering Division ranks high in the list of the B.B.C.'s colour pioneers. It was Watson, who with A. R. Stanley, Operations and Maintenance Department, Engineering Division, and Ian Atkins of the Television Service,

produced a fascinating survey of B.B.C. Experimental Colour transmissions in October, 1950; here are at least three men who squirm in their seats when they hear the question asked: "Why has the B.B.C. done nothing about colour?"

During the winter of 1957-8 a further series of experimental programmes was broadcast. This time the audience watching on colour receivers was bigger than on previous occasions. At the conclusion of these tests in 1958 the studio at Alexandra Palace was dismantled and the cameras installed temporarily in a van which later carried out two outside broadcasts. The first use of this mobile control room was made at the Festival Hall on 25 June 1958. A small interviewing studio was set up in the main assembly area on the occasion of the Soirée of the Institution of Electrical Engineers. Guests were invited to appear before the colour camera and were interviewed by Sylvia Peters. The signals from the studio were displayed on six receivers placed in various parts of the building. Were there any snags? . . . Yes, there were. An attempt to get pictures of dancers on the floor was a failure, because of the lack of sensitivity of the camera.

The colour camera was put to the supreme test in August, 1958, on the occasion of the Military Tattoo at White City; what an ideal event to televise in colour. It was likely to tell the colour pioneers much of what they wanted to know, as apart from plenty of colour, there was a good deal of movement and at times a mass of fine detail. The cameras were mounted, one fairly high up in the stands and the other down on the level of the arena, the camera on the stands using a zoom lens. The signal was transmitted by cable to Broadcasting House, where it was viewed on a closed circuit by an audience consisting principally of engineers. The transmission was a success in that it highlighted the difficulties which needed to be overcome before complete success could ever be achieved. The weather ran the full gamut of which an English summer is quite capable. Some pictures were very good; in fact some very dramatic shots were obtained of the firing of the guns of the King's Troop, but the final summing up of the operation overall, clearly indicated the immense difficulties facing colour outside Broadcasts. Some of the difficulties encountered were undoubtedly due to instrumentation and lack of experience, both of which time will remedy, but the insufficient sensitivity of the camera to take an outside

broadcast in the middle of the summer showed how very limited outside broadcast work would be in this country at the present point of colour development. It called for an increase in the sensitivity of the cameras of say, some four to ten times. This could only be obtained by improving the pick-up tubes while maintaining, and if possible, improving the quality in other aspects of the performance.

From October, 1958 until the present time, a regular series of experimental transmissions has been radiated from the London transmitter at the Crystal Palace. The main purpose is to provide a high quality signal largely for the industry engaged in further research. Up to the autumn of 1960 there were morning and afternoon colour transmissions but the morning transmissions had to be discontinued from 19 September when the schedule was rearranged to allow more time for Schools broadcasts. Why were school broadcasts allowed to push colour into the background? Certainly not because the B.B.C. is of the opinion that colour television has no future, but simply that everything is now known about existing equipment. The research has been done over a long period of years and it is known where the difficulties lie. It would be utterly foolish to suggest that perfect colour transmissions would be possible immediately if a "Go ahead" was given on a national basis by the Pilkington Committee, but was television reproduction perfect when it began as the first service in the world in 1936. Does not Leslie Mitchell talk of constant breakdowns and the teething troubles of those hectic days?

The long series of technical colour tests extending over nearly six years is quite exceptional. It is appropriate to ask, particularly when the rate of technical development of electronics is borne in mind, why colour television in the field of broadcasting has remained, at least in this country, in a state of suspended development, with the prospect of a colour broadcasting service apparently no nearer, for so long a period. So far as technical causes of this state of affairs are concerned, it can be said with confidence that the most important result which has emerged from the B.B.C.'s work is that the performance of the adapted N.T.S.C. system is not one of the contributory causes. All the factors of the colour picture which aroused unfavourable comment belong to either the camera or the receiver, so the difficulties can be removed by technological development. In other words there is little wrong with

the system; it is merely the apparatus. Is it possible to improve upon this? It is, for during the long period of experiment considerable advances have been made in this direction. At least one development model of a commercial receiver of improved performance has appeared as a result of work in the research laboratories of the General Electric Company. It produces a picture of markedly superior quality to those on which the assessment of the colour television service was undertaken. Brightness, sharpness and registration have all improved. The stability of the performance has also been improved and this may well prove to be the most important step of all, since the necessity for frequent attention by a skilled person has undoubtedly been one of the principal points of criticism of colour television receivers, and has apparently contributed in some measure to the apparent lack of success of colour television in America. Obviously this is a salient point. If your colour television receiver goes wrong and it is far beyond the skill of the local radio and television dealer to put it right, where do you go from there? Would there be one pool of skilled maintenance men so overwhelmed in the teething days that if a viewer rang up on Midsummer's Day he would be promised a call on 18 December? It is no good launching colour television if it produces early chaos. In a press-button age the public will not stomach chaos for long, but the men engaged and married to colour television over a long period of years are certain that whilst the situation is obviously a long way from perfect, it has reached a stage in development where it should be set in motion.

One interesting aspect of this newest development in television is an amusing reminder of the good old days—the days when intermediate film called for a make-up with a thick yellowish foundation with grey eye shadow and red lips. Whilst not quite like this, colour make-up is necessarily more subtle and lifelike than that for black and white, because anything unnatural in the increased reality of the colour picture would be palpably obvious. Many black and white receivers may not be perfectly adjusted without the viewer noticing any defects but a green band round the outline of a man's nose, for instance, is likely to be spotted at once and would become quite unpalatable. If the operational conditions are correct, very little make-up is required, even for colour, but there are cases of abnormal skin coloration (red or pale) and excessive contrasts between artistes appearing which have to be dealt with. As far as

women are concerned their arms and necks need make-up unless the necessary slight darkening is present owing to natural suntan, and as there appears to be a tendency towards a blue emphasis in the system this necessitates the reduction to a minimum of eye shadow and confinement to the true-red or orange-red ranges of lipsticks. The traditional "milk and roses" English make-up makes the most stringent demands on production lighting. Variations in light level, which may be unnoticed on a brown suntan make-up will cause the lighter face to appear magenta in some circumstances. Yes, colour certainly has its problems but then so has life. This television story is full of problems, but very few of them have not been overcome. Eurovision has had its fill one way and another with language thrown in as an additional hazard to technical difficulties of spanning mountain ranges, converting line-standards and crossing frontiers. Mr Poniatoff and his Ampex recorders have changed the whole face of modern television, and heaven only knows Baird and the E.M.I. Company had enough troubles to sink a battleship; enough has been accomplished in the field of colour television development to suggest that it is amply worth persevering with. Once upon a time a 30-line standard was sufficient for television advance to be made. How utterly inadequate and almost ridiculous that seems now in the modern concept, but then no tree can grow unless its roots are fostered at the outset. Roughly, the same applies to colour television. The B.B.C.s feelings about colour were expressed by the Director-General in a speech at the Radio and TV Retailers' Association Dinner in October, 1960, when he said:

"We in the B.B.C. are ready and very eager to proceed with a small compatible colour service within the framework of our existing programme, without waiting for a decision on whether there is to be a future move to 625-line standards in Bands IV and V. We know the difficulties facing the radio industry in the design and manufacture of a colour receiver at a reasonable price—we have often discussed this matter with them. We know the difficulties at the level of the Television Advisory Committee (of which, of course, we are members) and the Government. But the Television Advisory Committee know our view that to wait for colour on 625-lines means that there will be no colour for a national audience for something like another ten years—and that, after the development work the B.B.C. has done during

the past six years, would be most regrettable. Meanwhile, there are signs that there may be a colour break-through at last in the United States; Japan, too, has started colour transmissions, and so experimentally has the Soviet Union. Let us be fourth and not fifth, sixth or seventh. We in the B.B.C. would be falling down on the job if we did not draw attention to the fact that we are ready, and that we want to maintain the lead in colour development which we have established in Europe."

This speech achieved a maximum impact. One newspaper story carried the heading "Manufacturers in TV Rumpus". Some were ready, apparently, to talk turkey and support the B.B.C. in an immediate move; others were not. It would be true to say that such a state of affairs prevailed even within the B.B.C. itself. Many of the old hands who had worked on colour on the existing 405-line standards were stimulated; they have wanted to go ahead for years; yet even at a senior level views were held which diametrically oppose the project. There is no question that a higher line standard must improve the quality of the picture; 625-line is, therefore, a better proposition and would give more satisfactory reproduction of colour, but B.B.C. engineers who have worked on colour insist that by getting everything they could out of 405-line, they could produce a satisfactory picture without waiting for a change in line standards which may not be for years. Such action would not prejudice the ultimate change to 625.

There are differences of opinion as to the value of colour. I have heard it said that very few programmes would be considerably improved by the use of colour. State occasions would, of course, and musical spectacles, and wild life programmes. The pro-colour group point out that life itself is not a matter of black and white; life is colour, and so every programme would become more natural. They also point out that no photographer who has taken up colour photography would ever go back and be satisfied with black and white.

I have also heard it mentioned that colour television receivers will always be expensive because a separate cathode ray tube is needed for each colour; this is far from the truth. There is one cathode ray tube with a triple gun assembly built inside it; the three main colours are red, green and blue. It has also been suggested that a colour receiver would be a mass of dials far beyond the comprehension of even those of average

intelligence. This also is untrue. The three main colour switches in addition to those normally used for black and white television are the colour killer (removes colour to revert to a programme in black and white); the hue (which is for adjusting the colours for flesh tints, for instance) and the saturation (which is for the degree of colour, the density, the depth of colour). Colour transmissions are still carried out daily for the trade. I have watched them; I am undeniably pro-colour as a result.

It is clear that colour receivers would be expensive. In Japan, apparently, the price is roughly three times that for black and white, but only production on a fairly large scale could bring that price down, but what is likely to set the ball rolling? If the introduction of colour is to await the change of line standards (a change in line standards, of course, will make every existing television receiver obsolete) then colour could lie dormant and unwanted for years. The Television Advisory Committee has said that the 405-line standards will not be adequate for all purposes for the next twenty-five years. When one measures the progress from the Baird Spotlight Studio in 1936 to the Television Centre in 1961—a period of twenty-five years, it would seem quite reasonable to assume that the T.A.C. were cautious to say the least of it. Not much today, in a scientific world, will still hold its place in a quarter of a century's time. Would it, therefore, not be worth while to take the bull by the horns and make the line standards change now, despite the problems. The change would produce a better picture; make possible the introduction of colour, and greatly facilitate the exchange of programmes with other countries. It seems we might have missed the boat just after the war—was that not a good opportunity of starting afresh on line standards which we knew then were inevitable at some time or another? The point was that no other standard giving higher definition had then been developed. When science is confident that *it is on the edge of man's arrival on the moon*, it is surely worth advancing now. The introduction of colour would provide a great new stimulus for television viewers. The "I hardly look at television these days" fraternity would be drawn back. Socially, it would be the early 'fifties over again, for it is colour, and only colour, which interests the viewer as a television development.

The viewer has, at the present moment, two services—B.B.C. and

Independent Television, both offering a wide range of programmes; both services would like another channel, and, indeed, feel that another channel is essential to their presentation needs; it would also take a healthy competition a stage further. There is, however, the other school of thought which believes that there is too much television already, and since television is a monster which feeds on ideas—and is always hungry, the strain of putting on so many programmes each day is bound to lessen the quality of content of these programmes. This is only true in certain aspects of presentation as a whole, most of all, perhaps, in Light Entertainment. The B.B.C. believes that the un-committed channels in Band III should be used to extend the existing B.B.C. and I.T.A. Services.

“Pay-as-you-watch” television, where special events can only be seen by viewers by putting money in a slot on their set, would seem to be some way off in this country, although a British Company to operate pay-as-you-watch television has been formed to represent and demonstrate the advantages and possibilities. Broadly, its principle of working would be, for instance, for the company to buy the rights, shall we say of the Cup Final, for a very large fee, and viewers wanting to see it could only do so by putting half a crown in their set. Whether the television viewer who, for twenty-five years, has been used to getting his television by turning on a switch is going to react to keeping a pile of half-crowns standing by for use, is a matter for hard thought. There is not much evidence that it has been a big success across the Atlantic and its only chance would seem to be in heavily populated areas.

The future, then, is poised almost as it was towards the end of 1934, when a little band of pioneers were awaiting the results of Lord Selsdon’s Committee on Television. The Committee’s findings were issued as a White Paper in January, 1935—“A general service will only be reached, step by step, but the steps should be as frequent as possible, and in our opinion the first step should be taken now.” Lord Selsdon’s Committee virtually launched television with this document and an exciting new world came into being. The 300 ft mast at Alexandra Palace in 1936 which served London, gave way in March, 1956, to a 700 ft tower in a sort of no-man’s-land in the ruins of the old Crystal Palace, where a couple of statues of lions still remain as a reminder of the great glass construction which once stood proudly there. At one time

John Logie Baird worked on this very ground. Tonight, if 13,124,000 Home County viewers watch television, the success of their picture will be in the hands of three men at the Crystal Palace transmitter—a senior engineer, an engineer grade, and a technical assistant. Much of the equipment is duplicated should a serious fault arise—but never has there been a fault on programmes.

The men of this Crystal Palace outpost are zealously guarding a proud reputation—*we have never failed.*

